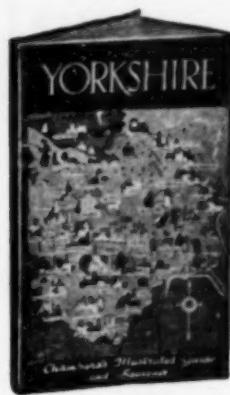


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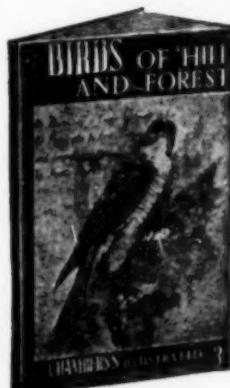
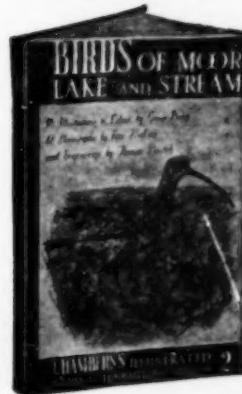
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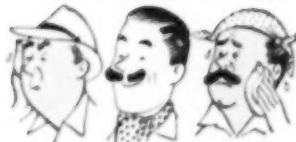
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Winds Over Continents

V. BRIDGE-WELLS

WHEN Etta had bought the house in Crowborough she knew she must go back. But she had known it for a long time, and this purchase of a house and garden within sight of the heather and slopes of Ashdown was to herself the ultimate mystery. For it was Sussex. The home of earliest childhood lay just across the county border, and these very fields and woodlands, these high pastures and landscapes of summer England were the magnet which had drawn her home once across the world.

Perhaps as the rabies-infected hero forged the chains to control his own madness, and as Ulysses bound himself to the mast to flee the songs of the Sirens, she also hoped still to escape by spending every last resource upon this land of a thousand associations, by achieving the crowning desire of a long life—solitude in an English garden.

There was no grave on the old place to draw her back. But graves are not the most potent remembrancers of the dead. Her father lay in Karrakatta between the city and the sea. But in his youth and his prime he had ridden the boundaries far inland, and walked stalwart over paddocks which stretched for miles.

There was no country like that in England. Only on the Fens or the high York wolds when winds blew from the east and the blue of heaven was flecked by the light plumes of rainless clouds did a sudden sense of recognition sometimes obliterate all time and circumstance and carry her apart into a region which was neither of this land nor of that, but the hilltops of the dreams of youth. Thence sprang that yearning for the known and unknown country, beloved and left behind. The yearning for which there was no cure, save death or return.

In summer nights at Crowborough when darkness had fallen there was sunlight on those landscapes of the South. And in Etta's thought the intervening deserts and the waste leagues of wandering foam were annihilated; the hot light of noon was on her face, and the winds sang in the gums as they did when time was young.

Yet of these things the hungry imagining might have been endured. The covered fires had smouldered for many years, and Etta had come to Crowborough resolutely, determined to look no longer backward nor beyond, but to fix her eyes on the last short journey of

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the tired body, which could not now be long delayed. For she was seventy, and about her here was all she had longed for in many Australian years, given with a free-handed generosity which took no account of cost.

But it was the deserted homestead from which there was no escape. In moments of intense thought she saw the doors always open, and the dust blew through them. The hessian which partitioned room from room was torn down and spiders thickly wove their webs among the rafters. At night the iron roof shone white under the moon, or by starlight the house was a darker huddle among the trees, and with dawn came the east wind to batter its loneliness anew. So when the Forest lay grey in the rain of an August evening, and the scent of honeysuckle was sweet in the garden, Etta stood near the gate which overlooked the long slope of heather. But it was not Ashdown on which her eyes were fixed. Evening fell in another clime, and the stars brightened over a darkening continent. The rough fence of the pioneer ran down a rocky bank into grey-green scrub and piercing the gum belt half-a-mile away melted into the blue of the trees. There was nothing else, only the clear vault of the twilight sky, and, in the valley hollow, the homestead.

Heather and English trees were not blurred by rain alone. And yet there was apparent peace in Etta's calm face, in the easy poise of the spare and upright figure. And Brand Jameson, watching as he worked with shears or hoe about the garden she had bought from him, thought her well content, seeing there the peace which possessed his own mind. To him, who remembered very much, she seemed anchored at last, like a ship which had ridden out a long gale and reached port. And the bewilderment which later fell on him was in proportion to the error of this analogy. For Etta Carrick, secure and at rest in the land of her birth and love, was like a homeless exile, or a mother continually forcing herself to disregard the child which clasps beseeching hands upon her arm.

IT was Jameson himself who broke the last silken bands which held Etta; who did the thing he would have died rather than do, and threw out a challenge which her spirit could not refuse. It is one thing to know a child,

another to know a woman whom one has seen but twice or thrice in a lifetime. And Etta's mind had grown under the influence of two worlds, of which he knew but one.

Twenty years had passed since with light-hearted rapture she had come home to stay. Then she had flashed on his life a momentary warm brightness, replacing his memories of the school-child with the mature woman behind whom stretched half a life. If she had found the first winters hard, and a strangeness in the dimly remembered environment of childhood, all that was now long past. She had wandered England from end to end with brush and palette, and eyes which threw over every landscape the veil of her own dreaming; but constantly dissatisfied with the best of her work, and always homeless, always poor. And at last had come back to the homeland of the Sussex border, and found him where he had always been, and the house he had kept for her, in anticipation of this consummation, beyond which there was nothing to hope for or fear.

Surely she had struck deep roots in her native England during a stretch of two decades! What could that southern land mean now to Etta, who had worn out youth and maturity alike in some desert place he would never see? Perhaps a sheaf of bitter memories, blurring and flattening into the past. Undoubtedly she dreamed still, as she stood by the hour in the garden with eyes on some southern horizon. Probably the past still haunted her, but she would never wander more. So ran his errant thought. The subtle reversal wrought by the English years was beyond his guessing, and he knew nothing of the winds that blow over continents. Moreover, in Etta the deeps were covered by a surface equable and placid, and if she seemed indifferent to the solid comfort of the house, she loved the English trees and lawns and garden. Daily Brand worked to maintain the fair order which was his ideal for her environment; daily he attended unobtrusively to every want he might anticipate. Yet she spoke to him rarely, and then used only his surname, as she had done when they were children. It had an austere ring now than in those early years, and also she seemed more remote in spirit from him than when she had first returned, twenty years before.

Leaving for his home in an early September twilight, Brand came into her room with a bundle of books. His step was not light,

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for he usually announced his presence in the house, but, even so, he spoke twice before she looked up momentarily from her chair by the fire. 'These will keep your evenings amused for a week or two, Etta.'

'No. Take them away, Jameson. I shall never read them. I must go back.'

Brand took his pipe from his pocket and walked to the window. The evening sky was a pale opal, flushed with pink where light clouds still held the sun. Earth and trees were darkening. 'Back where?' he said, with the half-comprehension of a divided mind.

'Back home.' The words fell so quietly that he guessed rather than heard. Etta turned again to contemplate the sleeping depths of the fire.

A coldness, almost a faintness, came over Brand as he stood, yet in its midst, by some second-sight extraordinary for a man of little imagination, he suffered a kind of dream wherein he and the Island seemed aligned against her and something immense, waste, hot, and very far away.

'What folly is this, Etta?' he said suddenly and loudly. He turned from the window and approached her chair, but his eyes were darkened and he scarcely saw the bent figure above the fire.

'The folly is in lingering here so long. Have you ever known what it is to put off and put off and try to evade what must be done at last? When it is too late, then I could not go. Too late, Brand! After all there is only one place . . . after all.'

Brand!

'You cannot leave home at your age. You know you have everything you want here, Etta, and there is nothing I would not add. And if you left England you would have nothing. Where would you go? And what would you find when you got there? A wilderness of sand and scrub. Even the house must be gone by now. Blown down or eaten away by the ants. How long is it since you left the place? That accursed place which stole your youth and robbed you of your rights! And what would you do with it at your age? It's damnable folly to think of it! Now of all times after twenty years in your own land! Great heavens, Etta, I thought you had settled at last! I say it is damnable folly!'

He began quietly, checked by the echo of his name, which might well fall like the dove of peace between them. But as its bitter

emptiness smote him, his voice rose on a crescendo of passion, moved by a rush of thought of whose existence he had hardly known.

When he stopped, the silence could be felt. Etta stood up, and in the dim light, half of the fire, half of the dying day, looked at him with steady eyes. Never had Brand spoken so to her before. The flash of his anger was as lightning to her lingering purpose. They looked at one another in the silence. 'And is it so?' she said, her voice little above a whisper. 'Then, Jameson, I am going home.'

IT was a troubled and bewildered old man who, fifteen months later, made his landing at Fremantle. A strange world ebbed and flowed around him; men spoke their English in other voices than those he knew; the heat of the southern January oppressed him, and he was far from home. But no other shift than this would avail. Etta answered his letters with brevity, yet between the lines he could read the pride which would never own to an error of judgment. Like her father, who for a shallow quarrel had put half the world between himself and his home, and had never returned, she, drawn back by the strong magnetism of land and of race, as if to set his wandering right, had after twenty years on a sudden impulse started off to go back there, leaving everything for nothing, a green Eden for a desert. Incredible folly of a rational woman! Well, he had let a year pass, and now, unheralded, he came himself. She would return as casually as she had gone. Yes, surely she would.

A night and a day he spent in the city, and at evening of the second day set his face to journey to the inland country. And how vast an inland! Hour after hour, when a sleepless night was gone at last, through the waxing heat of the summer day the train jolted painfully northward or stood idly at the lonely sidings. The dawn had broken and the red sun risen up over an empty, limitless east. Scattered groups of salmon gums, their tops tossing in the rising wind, emphasised rather than cancelled the flat and featureless immensity. A land like a sphinx, fascinating its victims by a cruel hypnotism. He thought of his garden and the beeches at Crowborough, and the green hills of Sussex. Would to God Etta had never known this country!

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Towards noon the wind fell, but the midday heat burnt like an oven, and the close, dusty compartment was almost intolerable. For a while he slept uneasily, dreaming of other places and other times, and of a woman who cried to him with ecstasy on her face: 'I have come home, Jameson!' With a start he awoke and groped for the flask in his bag.

It was between three and four o'clock when he arrived at one of those same wilderness sidings, which yet differed from all others. For him it bore a name and it was the last. As the train went on into the scrub-bound distance and dwindled from sight, Brand felt a light breeze from the west fan his forehead with cooling touch. He picked up his bag, crossed the metals, and walked away into the shade of the gums, following a plainly-marked cart-track. Over to the left a good-sized farmhouse showed up in the midst of open paddocks, but he passed it at a mile's distance and hugged the track through the timber. So he came at length to a fence-line in broken country, and a gate, and a new road which ran through more than man-high scrub at right angles to the fence. The bush was grey-green and tossing now in the freshening westerly.

At the end of the road a shanty stood in a flat of scattered York gums, and between their trunks he saw away to the right the field which she had talked about once or twice. Brand fixed his eyes on the shanty. It was rough weather-board outside, with a high-ridged roof of corrugated-iron. In front was an unfloored veranda, and at the back clung a lean-to, iron-roofed also, but with walls of whitewashed bags stretched tight. The hard-beaten red earth was bare, and there was no garden.

A physical sensation, experienced only once before, tightened in his throat and breast, and he stopped to set his bag fumblingly against a post. As he went slowly on again he suddenly saw Etta coming along a path beyond the house—a path overhung with the foliage of sapling gums, glinting silverly in the wind. She wore a light cotton dress and a shady hat tied under her chin, and she was carrying a bucket of water. A flight of green parrots, uttering their staccato cries, skimmed through the trees behind her and vanished. Brand stood still like one who could go no farther. When Etta saw him she put down the bucket and came to meet him, and their hands clasped. 'Jameson,' she said, 'is this true!'

But even at that moment her surprise was quiet, and the familiar little laugh, half-quizzical but wholly kind, brightened her eyes and lips. 'How did you find your way? Jameson, you *here!* But you are very tired and hot. Come in and rest.'

He forgot to let go her hand, but held it in both his, while his clearer eyes dwelt on her brown, lined face. And what should have waited on time and occasion, held in, controlled, until skilled generalship called to action, burst forth at once. 'Etta,' he cried, 'what are you doing in this God-forsaken solitude? There is only one place for you now, in your old age. I have come a long way. My dear, come home with me.'

Etta withdrew her hand from his clasp. She looked beyond him and then around her, with the quiet air of one who takes stock and is satisfied. In those few moments of living silence Brand knew that he had lost. The firm realities in his own mind, the established symbols of comfort, wealth, security, and beauty, were to her but the fading ghosts of a disregarded past. Her eyes were on the wide horizons of the scrub, veined by the darker gum belts; they returned to rest on the grey little shanty, and the thin trees about it. She answered simply, 'I have come home.'

FAR into the summer night Etta and Brand talked. The wind had ceased, and outside the shanty the stillness of the starlight was broken only by the occasional cry of the mopoke. Moths flitted about the lamp on the rough table between them, and when at moments their voices fell to silence there was no sound save the fluttering of futile wings against the glass.

The light fell on Etta's face, sun-tanned to a healthy brown, placid in its untroubled calm. It fell too upon Brand, where he sat with hands clasped about his knees, drawing at a slow pipe. His face was grey and he seemed older than the man who had climbed from the train in the heat of the afternoon. He had said all that he could say, and had told her more than he had ever thought of telling, and she had listened with her eyes fixed upon him, her firm mouth softened, and at times a gleam in her eyes as of tears.

When he could say no more, Etta stood up and went to her bookshelves. Rummaging beneath them she took up some pictures, put them down again, and came back slowly to

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her chair. 'Yes, Jameson. I have known all this for a long time. And nothing less would have brought you so far and so surely. I did not want to come back. No, you will not understand me. For how can I expect you to understand what I cannot grasp myself, what is beyond any reasoning? Men are drawn against their will to strange things, and this was like a passion. It grew in my heart until there was room for nothing else, until a great tide had set away from my England, and I could no longer resist it. This continent where the winds were born; this home my father had made for me; my memories of him; his voice; his gaiety; our long talks in this very room; and, last, my youth. Over there in England, life—my life—seemed as it were a pattern of two circles. One was complete. But the other, the greater, overlay the less and was broken and imperfect.'

Brand slowly shook his head as one whose comprehension is baffled, and Etta continued more quietly: 'I could not escape my memories of this place, Jameson, and when I thought of it empty, buffeted by the winds, given up to every agent of decay, something seemed to die in my heart.'

As she paused, Brand's eyes surveyed the hessian-covered walls, shadowy in the semi-darkness beyond the ring of lamplight. His lips tightened. After a moment he said gently: 'How then did you find it, Etta? I mean, in what case?'

'It had been looked after to some extent, because the Hantsfield people stored their chaff and seed wheat in this room. They were using the paddocks my father cleared, and the fences we made together, but they had not bought his farm. I paid off some arrears of land-tax and an old bank debt, and they let me have it back. Hantsfield still crop the main paddocks, but they pay me a rent, and the sheep are mine. I have repaired

all the fences since I came back; I go round them on foot every week, and lately I've had time for painting. To-morrow I will show you some sketches and water-colours made since the spring.'

'Etta, what will you do if you are ever ill?'

'I am not alone. Madge Barnes comes every day from Derinu to cook for me. Sometimes she stays at night. I am at peace here, Brand, as I could never be at Crowborough.'

They were silent while Brand finished his pipe. Etta went out to her lean-to kitchen and, reviving the dying fire, made two cups of coffee, which they drank while Brand talked of his voyage. Presently Etta stood up, and a smile brightened her tired face. 'Aren't you more than ready for rest? Your bed is made on the veranda. Sleep sound at Minada. Good-night.'

IT was about eleven o'clock on the next morning when Brand left. The skies were clear, and a cooler wind blew from the west. Etta walked with him to the fence-line, which went down over outcrops of rock and faded into a far-off gum belt. At the gate they stopped. Here his road turned and he would go on alone. As he took her hand, Brand looked into Etta's eyes. They met his steadily. He said nothing. Etta unfastened the gate, which fell in a limp heap at their feet. Brand raised his hat. 'Good-bye,' he said quietly.

'Good-bye, Brand.'

He crossed the fallen gate and, stooping, refastened it. Etta turned to go. He watched her until her upright figure began to lessen between the green lines of the scrub. Suddenly she looked back and, seeing him there still, waved her hand. A few minutes longer, and she had reached the gums around the shanty, and he saw her no more.

August First Story: *Sailors Hate the Sea* by John Prebble.

Not Asphodel

*It likens the sun,
And it likens the moon,
With its disc of gold,
And its seed balloon.*

*With a sun to flower,
And a moon to seed,
The dandelion's a
Heavenly weed.*

JAMES MACALPINE.



Soft-Eyed Stranger

Resettling the Reindeer in Scotland

ALLAN DOUGLAS

'**W**E'RE I a rich man,' said Samuel Johnson to the attentive Boswell, 'I would introduce foreign animals into the country: for instance, the reindeer.'

The evening on which Johnson was so disposing of his unaccumulated riches was in March 1772. A little less than twenty years later, when Boswell was carving his monumental *Life* of the learned doctor, he was able to add to the conversation a portentous footnote: 'This project has since been realized. Sir Henry Liddell, who made a spirited tour into Lapland, brought two reindeer to his estate in Northumberland, where they bred; but the race has unfortunately perished.'

Sir Henry's little herd perished, and therefore for Boswell—is an end of the matter. It is not, however, the end of the matter for us. It is, indeed, only the beginning. This experiment is one of the earliest recorded attempts to re-establish the reindeer in the British Isles, and its failure and the failure of all subsequent attempts appear to provide rather a discouraging background for the experiment which is starting near Aviemore, Inverness-shire. And the Aviemore experiment will be of some importance to Scotland. Sir Henry's venture may have been the whim of a rich man,

but there is nothing whimsical about the present project. It will be, firstly, a carefully controlled scientific experiment, and, secondly, a 'spirited' effort to increase Scotland's wealth.

ANY credit that may emerge from the work at Aviemore will be mainly due to Dr Ethel J. Lindgren and her husband, Mr Mikel Utsi, a reindeer-owner in north Sweden. Dr Lindgren, a British subject, Swedish by marriage, was so impressed by the economic benefit derived from the reindeer in her husband's country that she set about trying to ship some reindeer into the country of her birth. Her first application for an import licence was rejected by the Board of Trade in 1948. Like all pioneers, Dr Lindgren accepted an initial set-back as a challenge and energetically pushed her project into public attention. Before the end of the year she had infected several influential people with her enthusiasm and the Reindeer Council of the United Kingdom was established, under the chairmanship of Sir Frederick Whyte, to carry forward her plans.

The Council approached the Government,

SOFT-EYED STRANGER

who looked at the proposal again. Dr Lindgren wanted to import a herd of twenty-five animals and to allow them to breed in some suitable area in Scotland. The departmental machine began to move. In a highly-organised state even a simple project may involve half-a-dozen ministries. The Council had, for instance, to persuade the Minister of Agriculture that the importation of the reindeer would not endanger the health of other animals in the country; the Secretary of State for Scotland would have to consider the possible agricultural and economic repercussions; the Nature Conservancy would have to assess the risk of disturbing the ecological balance through the introduction of a new species of animal life.

Slowly, the wheels started turning. To the enthusiastic sponsors the wheels must have seemed to turn as slowly as the divine mills. Enthusiasm was countered with caution, generalities were ground to particularities, and particularities sifted into *pro* and *contra* heaps. Then, at the beginning of March 1951—one hundred and seventy-nine years after Johnson had set the lead—the Secretary of State for Scotland announced that the *pro* heap was larger than the *contra* heap, that the Government authorised the importation of reindeer so that an experiment might be carried out—under strict conditions and animal-health safeguards.

It only remained for the Council to detail a project that would meet the Government's conditions, and the Aviemore scheme represents their detailed proposition. To the area of three hundred acres which Lieutenant-Colonel J. P. Grant, Younger of Rothiemurchus, has made available there Mr Utsi will bring a small herd for a three-year experiment. Operations have already started. The area has been fenced; and eight reindeer have arrived from Narvik. Later in the year another five reindeer will be brought over. The commercial side of the venture has been put into the hands of the Reindeer Co., Ltd., which was registered in February, 'to buy, breed, graze, and sell reindeer and other livestock.' The whole cost of the experiment will fall on Mr Utsi and the Company, but if the experiment is successful the benefit will accrue to the nation.

If the experiment is successful . . . What are the chances of success? Before we can attempt to answer that question we must, first of all, picture the reindeer in its natural habitat.

THE tundra, which is the favourite stamping-ground of this Rangifer, is a snow-field for about two-thirds of the year. During the brief, brilliant summer it is a rolling carpet of many-hued lichens and mosses, interspersed with stunted berry-bushes and diversified around the water-courses by lusher plants and straggling copse. To the north, the scanty vegetation gives way to fields of unbroken snow and ice; to the south, the stunted copse gather into woods, gradually rise and thicken into forests. The reindeer is the camel of this Arctic desert between the permanent snow-fields and the forests.

Small, soft-eyed, the reindeer looks, at first sight, better fitted for posing for Christmas-cards than for working in Arctic and sub-Arctic areas. But its first appearance is deceptive. Although little more than three feet high, it is strong and determined. It can pull about two hundred and twenty pounds or carry from sixty-five to ninety pounds in saddle-bags. It can travel at about twelve miles an hour and cover thirty-five to forty miles a day. With its spread hooves it can make its way over snow, ice, and morass, and search for its fodder under snow, provided that the snow is neither drift-deep nor hardened to ice on the surface.

The herding of animals of such varied talents is a skilled occupation. In the Barren Lands of the New World there is no tradition of herding the caribou, the reindeer's Canadian counterpart, but in the tundra of the Old World the Lapps—that mysterious, nomadic people who live in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia—have been herding reindeer for longer than any of the historians I have consulted can remember. The Lapps follow the roving deer hundreds of miles every year, relying upon them for food, clothing, transport, and most of their other material needs. The deer are only semi-domesticated, but they are strongly gregarious in instinct, and five men are sufficient to cope with a herd amounting to one thousand, including about ten bulls.

The herding calendar outlines the simple, strenuous story of the Lapps. Winter drives the herd south to the shelter of the forests, to find reindeer-moss (*Cladonia rangiferina*) under the snow, and lichens from the bark of trees; in an exceptionally severe winter the deer may move down to cultivated areas in search of food, and the herdsmen warn the

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farmers to keep their hay under cover. Normally, the deer need no help to find food—it is said that they can smell reindeer-moss under three feet of snow. With the first promise of spring, the herd turns northwards again, making for hills or secluded spots where the cows may calve undisturbed. The period of gestation is ten months, and, ordinarily, single calves are born. The cows need no assistance to deliver, but the herdsman must ensure that they are undisturbed and must slaughter or rear by hand an occasional twin. The increased herd moves on to graze the summer growth of green plants and the young shoots of dwarf willow and birch.

The brilliant summer, however, also brings out millions of mosquitoes and flies, which torment the deer by laying eggs under their skin and in their nostrils, and the herd has to keep moving, seeking the cold air of hilltops or snow-fields, and woods where they can rub their itching bodies. To give some temporary relief the herdsman will light smudge fires to windward of the day's pasture, but they cannot keep the tormented beasts together for long. Driven by the swarms of insects, the herd begins to disintegrate during the brief summer; and in autumn, after the first snowfall, the herdsman have to set out with lassos to round the beasts up for marking and counting. The calves' ears are notched with the registered mark of the owners; and young males suitable for driving or destined for slaughter are gelded. At the same time, the herd is counted, not only to give the owner the pleasure of reckoning his wealth, but also in order that the government taxes may be computed. A well-managed herd will increase by at least twenty per cent each year, but, on the other hand, a healthy Lapp will eat at least half-a-dozen deer in the same period. Say, five herdsman, each with five of a family, at six reindeers per appetite—and you can see where the money goes.

THERE is a foreign ring about all this description of a nomadic existence depending largely upon the single occupation of deer-herding—so foreign that it is easy to become sceptical about the significance of the Aviemore experiment. But, as an antidote to this scepticism, we should remind ourselves that it is only some eight or nine hundred years ago since the reindeer roved in Scotland. Antlers found in several places, including the

foothills of the Pentland Hills, provide the testimony.

What happened to the Scottish reindeer? We can only surmise that the destruction of the great forests and the competition of the red deer, which are larger and more pugnacious than the reindeer, contributed to the extinction of our native herds. Given that tentative answer, it is fair to ask why it is now considered possible to reintroduce the reindeer. Conditions were against the survival of the native herds, and all imported herds have, like Sir Henry's, 'unfortunately perished.'

The Duke of Atholl and William Bullock, the naturalist, were two of the early pioneers who tried to establish herds in Scotland—the former in 1816, the latter in 1820, the sites chosen by both being in the far north. Like attempts in England and Germany also failed. The only major successes in naturalisation were in Iceland in the late 18th century and in Alaska in the 19th century, which would appear to indicate that the reindeer will thrive only in places like Lapland, where there is a cold, dry climate and where the deer have room to rove, to calve in seclusion, and to escape the attentions of mosquitoes and flies. But there was another factor making for success, and perhaps it was the most important factor: in the unsuccessful experiments the herds were allowed to fend for themselves, while in the successful experiments they were tended by Lapps. Lapp herdsman went with the deer to Iceland and Alaska and helped them to become accustomed to their new environments.

The Aviemore herd will not be left to fend for itself, for the experiment will be carried out under the expert guidance of Mr Mikel Utsi. There are other encouraging factors, too. In Scotland reindeer-moss grows abundantly in several areas, including Aviemore; there are hillsides where the deer may calve in seclusion; there are sea-winds and trees to help the deer rid themselves of insects, and if these aids prove inadequate the herdsman may experiment with D.D.T. or some of the other modern insecticides. When it no longer has to migrate in search of food, the reindeer may soon settle down to a narrower, Scottish way of life; for one, the reindeer in the Edinburgh Zoo appears to thrive in captivity.

Indeed, the main obstacles to the establishment of herds in Scotland will probably be

IN PRAISE OF THE COMMON CLAY

the wet climate—although it has not changed much in the last nine hundred years—the competition of the red deer, and the antagonism of Scotsmen who fear that the reindeer will displace cattle and sheep from the hills, damage trees, startle tourists, and invade gardens and stackyards in a hard winter. We can do little to temper our climate to the soft-eyed strangers, but we can, if necessary, protect them from the red deer until they have had a chance to build up their strength. To the other criticisms the answer must be the celebrated piece of advice that Gladstone did not give to Queen Victoria—"Wait and see."

The prospect is briefly this: If we can establish the reindeer without displacing any other economically valuable animals, we can then convert the mooses and lichens which

are otherwise unused into meat, hides, horn, and other estimable commodities. Reindeer-meat is more palatable than the venison from red deer; reindeer-milk makes a cheese for the gourmet; between the wars we imported hides from Russia and Alaska, mainly to make ladies' handbags and chamois gloves; the hair is hollow and is used for stuffing mattresses and life-jackets; surgical sutures are made from the sinews; there is, indeed, an economic use for every part of a reindeer carcass. It is a prospect that more than justifies the experiment now being undertaken at Aviemore.

And a last word to the younger generation. Even if the roving reindeer does come to stay in our own hills, it is, I am afraid, most unlikely that Santa Claus will come to see us more often.

In Praise of the Common Clay

CHURCHWARDEN

IN these days of fantastically rocketing prices a missing or broken briar may seem an irreparable loss to the bereaved smoker. But, with all respect to the briar, there is no need to worry if you can find a tobacconist who stocks clay pipes. Few pipe-smokers even consider a clay nowadays, but, apart from its brittleness, it has all the virtues of the briar of ten times the price. And that's pretty good value to-day.

If you think that the clay is beneath your dignity, I can assure you that its ancestry is both ancient and honourable. It has been established in England for four hundred years. In 1598 a foreigner in England remarked that "the English are constantly smoking tobacco and in this manner: They have pipes on purpose made of clay, into the further end of which they put the herb, so dry that it may be rubbed into powder, and putting fire to it they

draw the smoke into their mouths, which they puff out again, through their nostrils, like funnels, along with it plenty of phlegm and defluxions from the head."

THE clay pipe was an immigrant from Virginia. The early models had extremely small bowls, as tobacco at that time cost three shillings an ounce. This sounds cheap in 1952 until one realises that it was about equivalent to twenty shillings to-day. A century after tobacco was introduced into England its price had slumped to eightpence a pound, though by Queen Anne's reign it had climbed to one-and-eightpence again. The stems of these early clays were about a foot long. Where the sloping bowl met the stem the clay was flattened underneath, so that the pipe would stand upright on a table. Some time after

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1700 this flat heel, as it was called, gave place to the more pointed spur, which is better known on clay pipes. The purpose of the spur appears to have been to keep the hot bowl clear of the table where the smoker rested it.

Clays were made in many parts of the country, but it is hardly surprising that the biggest producers should have been in Staffordshire, where the bulk of England's potteries have always been concentrated. Like all good craftsmen, the old pipe-makers liked to put their names, or at least their initials, on their wares, usually on the flat surface of the heel, until the spur supplanted it, when the marking moved to the bowl or stem. A few of these veterans are dated. But in any case, if you ever come across a clay that has the flat heel, it is a pretty safe bet that you have a genuine antique. It may even be a collector's piece.

THE 17th-century smoker got through a prodigious number of clays. The accounts of a country gentleman of that period show that he averaged about four a week. They were not all for his own use. His guests and even the women of his household probably contributed to the consumption, for smoking was widespread among women in all walks of society on account of the belief in its value as a fumigant against the plague. For the sum of eight-and-threepence this worthy bought two gross of Nottingham pipes, with packing and carriage included in the price. This sum caused him to comment in the margin of the account-book: 'Very dear, very dear.'

During the 18th century pipe stems grew steadily longer as the technique of making them improved. The credit for the first churchwarden belongs to one Noah Roden of Broseley in Shropshire, whose family had been pipe-makers as far back as 1681. Soon after the churchwardens, or London straws, as very long pipes were also called, made their appearance, the aristocratic meerschaum began to spread through Europe. But they were never for the poor man and have remained beyond the pocket of the average smoker ever since,

though many have aspired to own one of these amber-stemmed beauties, so attractive in their virgin whiteness and in their golden maturity. An essential to their proper colouring is that the outside of the bowl should be treated with wax. Many a sixpenny clay of to-day is similarly treated so that it will mellow in the same way.

THOSE accustomed to a vulcanite stem often find a clay awkward to hold in the teeth, in spite of the mouthpiece being slightly flattened. This difficulty can be got over by the use of sealing-wax. Heat the stick of wax until a thickish blob of it falls on the mouth-piece, taking care that it doesn't cover the hole. Then warm the waxed mouthpiece until the wax is pliable but not runny. Wet the end of the thumb and forefinger to prevent them from getting burned and gently mould the wax to the thickness you want and to such a length down the stem that no clay touches the mouth. Pinch the wax with the thumb- and finger-nails so as to provide a grip for the teeth. When in course of use you have bitten down to the clay it is a simple matter to warm the wax again and remould it.

Now to enjoy your pipe! The purist, who savours his tobacco for its own sake and not as a casual accompaniment to other occupations, will find the churchwarden best. All clays have wonderful absorptive properties, but the long stem of the churchwarden is supreme for giving a cool smoke as well as a dry one. Most clays with a shiny surface will colour up as they are smoked. An ordinary short one starts at the stem, which gradually turns a warm, yellowy brown. The golden blush spreads to the base of the bowl and gradually climbs up it until it reaches the smoke-blackened rim. At length the shade pretty well evens itself out all over the pipe, when it may be considered to have reached maturity, a joy to look at and a joy to smoke. When anyone casts aspersions on the respectability of my clays, I master the temptation to retort with 'phlegm and defluxions' and confine myself to pointing out their impeccable pedigree.



Fred Archer's First Race

JOHN A. FARMER

*At this Prestbury Inn lived Fred Archer,
the jockey,
Who trained upon toast, Cheltenham water,
and coffee.
The shoe of his pony hangs up in the bar,
Where they drink to his prowess from near
and from far.
But the man in the street passes by without
knowledge
That 'twas here Archer swallowed his
earliest porridge.*

This inscription, printed on a board gracing the half-timbered side of the King's Arms Inn at Prestbury, is familiar to residents of Cheltenham and district, but how many people, apart from local folk, are aware of the existence of the near-by Plough Inn, and much less of its neighbour the Vine Tree Inn—and that each one of these houses is connected with Fred Archer?

It all came to my notice in this way. My reading of the inscription was interrupted by the cracked voice of a bent, stunted, white-bearded old man suggesting that I should be wanting to see Gaffer. Naturally thinking that he was referring to the landlord, I assumed that he was in the house, and said so.

"No, he ain't," the old chap responded.

"He be gone home, sure to, 'cos I just seen him go along down the road."

"But surely he lives here," I said.

"The pub ain't his," the old man grinned. "The man I means is Gaffer Parker—him as was valet to Fred Archer in the old days as is gone."

"Oh!" I ejaculated, scenting a source of interest.

Forestalling my words, the old fellow added: "Gaffer be gone home, as I just said. But if you be so minded and go round to the Plough where his sister lives, she'll tell you about Fred Archer. You keeps straight on for a few yards, like, then turn left. You can't miss it."

Leaving the ancient spitting upon my erstwhile coins, I smiled, wondering how many free drinks the artful old sinner had obtained through hanging about the King's Arms in front of the inscription. Following his direction, I was soon round the corner and at the Plough Inn.

SENTIMENT quite apart, this two-storeyed house, its black-and-white front pierced by leaded casement windows, and crowned by a three-gabled thatched roof, was a gem of

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the past. And none the less interesting was the interior, with low, heavily-beamed ceiling and brown-washed walls supporting a few quaint old-fashioned coloured sporting prints. No sign of a bar-counter was to be seen, and the place seemed to be deserted. A few taps of my foot on the red-tiled floor awoke a sound of movement in an adjoining room, followed by the figure of an elderly, stout, motherly woman in a grubby white apron and her sleeves turned up to the elbow facing me in a second doorway.

In response to my request for half-a-pint of bitter she retraced her steps, followed by me, into what, I presume, was the cellar—a white-washed room with a stone floor framed by barrels placed upon low trestles. Taking a mug from a nail in the wall, she bent down and drew my half-pint.

'D'you happen to know anyone in the village called Gaffer Parker?' I asked.

'Gaffer Parker,' she smiled, handing me the brimming mug. 'Well, I ought to, considering as he's me own brother.'

'Then I expect you could tell me quite a bit about Fred Archer, the famous jockey,' I said. 'Your brother was his valet, wasn't he?'

Resting her hands on her broad hips, she smiled. 'You've been reading that there inscription on the King's Arms, I'll be bound. Yes, I knows you have, and you're not the first as 'as done it, neither.' There was a twinkle in her brown eyes which I found reassuring.

'Yes,' I agreed, 'you're quite right.'

'Well, 'tain't much as I can say about Fred Archer, without it be that he were brought to the Vine Tree Inn as a tiny infant—now, where he come to be born is beyond me to know; after that, he were took to the King's Arms, where he was rose, like. If you wants to know any more you'd best go and find me brother 'Orry.'

'Gaffer Parker, d'you mean?'

'Ah. You go along and find him, and if he's so minded he'll tell you about the first race as Fred Archer ever rode. No manner o' use for me to try, 'cos now I be got on in years, like, me memory ain't what it were. No. It ain't, not by a long chalk.'

'But you don't look all that old,' I said.

She laughed heartily. 'Get along now with your blarney and stop wasting any more of my time with your nonsense.'

Rising to her spirit with a grin, I paid for my drink and asked her the way to the Vine

Tree Inn, taking it for granted that someone else would direct me to Gaffer Parker.

'When you get outside, go a few yards to your left, and you'll see the sign of the Vine Tree hanging above you—on this same side of the road,' she said.

Again I spotted a twinkle in her eyes, and wondered why. Old as she was, with deep-wrinkled face and snow-white hair, she must, I thought, as I turned left-handed outside the house, have been a bundle of mischief when she was young.

TRUE to my directions, I quickly found myself beneath the hanging sign. Outside, the inn had the uninteresting and monotonous appearance of one of a row of houses in a dull street, with a flowering geranium in a pot showing through a ground-floor window.

My knock on the door was responded to by a young woman with a baby in her arms. 'Is this the Vine Tree Inn?' I asked.

'The what?' she exclaimed. 'Inn! Vine Tree!' Then, catching me glancing up at the sign, she smiled. 'Ah, it was an inn at one time, but that was before I came. I'd forgotten all about it. Can't think why they leave the sign hanging up there.'

'Sorry to have bothered you,' I apologised, sensing the cause of the twinkles in the eyes of the old lady at the Plough. 'Oh,' I asked, 'I wonder whether you can tell me where Gaffer Parker lives? You know him, I'm sure.'

'Ah, I knows him alright. If you goes back past the Plough, then straight on until you comes to the main road, you turns left there in the direction of Southam and keeps on for about a mile and you'll come to a lane on the right which will bring you up to Gaffer's cottage.'

GAFFER, a spare-built white-haired man, his bent back taking inches off his a bit above medium height, was a contrast to his stout, motherly sister at the Plough. 'Nice day,' I greeted him over his garden-fence.

'Nice dry weather,' he answered, straightening himself up from weeding a row of carrots. Then, approaching me, he lifted his black jacket from a post supporting his wicket-gate and put it on.

'You're Gaffer Parker, aren't you?' I smiled, encouraged by his friendly manner.

'Ay, sir, that's me.'

FRED ARCHER'S FIRST RACE

'I wonder whether you'd mind telling me something about Fred Archer? Your sister at the Plough said you might not mind. You were his valet, weren't you?'

'His valet!' he grinned. 'I was valet to Major Owen—Roddy Owen, he was called—who won the Grand National on Father O'Flynn, at one time. Ah, and a grand gentleman he was, too.'

'A great sportsman,' I agreed.

Gaffer's eyes lighted up. 'Ah, and a fine officer he was, too. Ever heard how he once broke Army Orders, sir? He were a Captain in a crack cavalry regiment at the time, he was.'

I nodded encouragement.

'Well, sir, orders was that no shaved upper-lip was to be allowed on parade. But, against that order, one morning Captain Owen turned up with no moustache on his face at all.' Gaffer paused and stroked his chin. 'Now, sir, can you imagine,' he grinned, 'how this was took? Ordered off the parade-ground, he was, and no mistake made about it.' Chuckling, he added: 'But was the Captain to be outdone? Not him. The very next morning that ever were the Captain turned up as large as life on parade—with, what d'you think? Why, with a darned big chunk of fur the colour of a fox's brush stuck under his nose, he did.'

Amusing as the anecdote was, it lost nothing by Gaffer's way of telling it, and his hearty laugh was infectious. But my real interest was in Fred Archer. So, in order to check what might have developed into a flow of anecdotes about Roddy Owen, I remarked that his sister at the Plough had told me that he could tell me about the first race that Fred Archer rode.

'His first race, she said, did she? Ah, but come along inside and I'll show you something about Fred Archer.' And with renewed chucklings he led me up the path to his typical Cotswold cottage.

'WHAT d'you think of these?' Gaffer said, withdrawing his hand from a canvas-bag taken from a dresser in his living-room and holding up a pair of spurs and a snaffle bridle. 'They both belonged to Fred Archer, and he gave them to me. Look carefully at the bit and you'll see the letters F. A. on it. This 'ere bridle was what he had for winning his first race.'

'First race?' I echoed.

'Ah, sir, his first race it were, and it come

about in this way. One Thursday . . . ah, one Thursday, in Whitweek, it were, I recollects. You know, in them days, sir, it were common to have donkey races.'

'Donkeys?' I ejaculated.

'Ah, donkeys they was—not 'osses, you understand. Well, Lord Ellenborough who owned the house called Delabere, I means, Southam Delabere, he had a moke what he called Southam Lass—and a damn good animal she was. Having, I suppose, a fancy for Fred Archer, who was but a slip of a lad in them days, his Lordship lent him Southam Lass to ride in the race. It was the time when Fred was being brought up at the King's Arms, if you didn't know. Well, Fred rode Southam Lass and another boy called Joe Smith rode another moke. I can't recollect what they called this animal, and no matter about any other mokes.'

'Any colours up?' I asked.

'Ah, sir, there were. Fred, he'd got some proper uns what he'd gone and borrowed. They was black and white. And as for Joe, he just took his jacket off, turned it inside out, and put it on again. They were his colours.'

I smiled. 'Catch-weights, eh?'

Gaffer grinned broadly. 'The start was at the Southam Delabere Lodge, by the road you come along just now, and you passed it. That's where they started, and the finish was in front of the King's Arms, you recollect, where Fred lived. As near as makes no difference the distance along the high-road was a mile.'

'Hammering, hammering, on the hard, hard road, eh?' I added.

'Not so much 'ammering, sir,' grinned Gaffer. 'Can you imagine a pack of donkeys extending themselves?'

'Hardly,' I agreed. 'Expect that they were all over the place, some of 'em taking a nibble at the grass on the road verge, I shouldn't wonder.'

'Ah, and taking their own time in spite of bucketing with whip and spur,' laughed Gaffer. 'Comic it were, with the jockeys doing all the hard work. However, Southam Lass, with Fred Archer on top, got to the King's Arms first, he did. And this snaffle bridle was what was given to him for winning.'

'What of the spurs? Did Fred wear them in this race?'

Ignoring my question, Gaffer ran on. 'Ah, and these young chaps—you know what youngsters are—they wasn't by no means

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satisfied with a flat-race, not them; they must needs have a steeplechase on donkeys.'

'On what?' I exclaimed. 'Ride donkeys over fences, d'you mean?'

'Well now, sir, as to fences, that there I'll leave you to judge when you've listened to me. This is how it come about.

'**T**HREE were two in this race—a match, you understand, sir. One of 'em was Fred Archer; t'other chap, and a rare comic he was, was called Dodger.'

'Did Fred ride Southam Lass again?'

'No, sir, he didn't. He rode a moke what they called Peter Simple; and Dodger's mount was named Penarth.'

'Same colours, eh?'

'Ah, sir, the colours were the same. Fred in the black and white borrowed uns, and Dodger turned his jacket, same as Joe Smith had done in the flat-race. And got up with whips and spurs they was, both on 'em.'

'What sort of a course was it?' I asked. 'Small made-up fences in a field, eh, with wide wings to keep the mokes from running out?'

'You wait till I tells you, sir. You knows the Plough at Prestbury—where you saw my sister. Well, 'twas there that these two youngsters mounted their mokes, and then rode 'em round to the back. They were soon

off, and in grand style. The first fence was a brook—not very wide or deep, you understand.' Gaffer paused, and looked whimsically at me. 'What d'you think happened, sir?' he asked.

'One napped it and the other ran out,' I suggested.

'You're not far out, sir,' he grinned. 'Both mokes stuck their feet into the bank and napped it good and proper, they did. But that didn't by no means end the race. And, what's more, Fred won.'

'How?' escaped me.

'How, sir? Well, try as they would, both with whip and spur, ah, and hollering as well, they couldn't get either of the mokes to budge an inch—that is, without you count shaking their heads and ears.' Again Gaffer paused. 'How?' he repeated. 'Well, a number of lusty blokes what were looking on suddenly rushed in and picked up Peter Simple with Fred on top and carried the pair of 'em across the brook.'

'How about Dodger?' I asked.

'Him—oh, him. Some more lusty blokes went and collared Dodger and Penarth under him and gave the pair of 'em a damn good ducking in the brook, they did. And mind you, sir, they took precious care to keep Dodger and his donk on the take-off side, sure to. Therefore, 'cos Fred was on the t'other side, you see, sir, he were the winner.'

The Decorator

*My window's a fixed eye that stares to meet
The stare of others from across the street.
Windows and walls, roofs, chimneys—then the eye
At last, up-peering, glimpses the grudged sky;
That means an effort; working caverned here
My prospect's of man's making, and so drear
In summer, for the exiled country-bred,
That I make visions for myself instead.
Those walls turn braes and corries; roofs of slate
The hard-won summits where the free winds wait
And I can breathe, and energy's renewed
By space, serenity, and solitude.
And so for me no ranks of windows stare;
Mountains fantastical, for flats, rise there.
Forgive me, you whose homes those dwellings be,
Or, in revenge for my bold liberty,
Magic mine hence, a nobler view to gain,
And with it me, and I shall not complain.*

W. K. HOLMES.



Weather-Saints

WINIFRED I. HAWARD

Of all the weather-sayings scattered over the English calendar, the tradition of St Swithin's Day, July 15th, is the best known, and the least rational—"If it rains on St Swithin's Day, it will rain for forty days after."

Short-term sayings, which only attempt to forecast the weather for a few days or hours ahead, have their roots in observation and experience, and usually contain some basis of truth. But to forecast the behaviour of the English climate for a period of nearly six weeks, especially in terms of 'all-wet' and 'all-dry,' is to claim for our national weather-saint powers far beyond those of modern meteorological science. In fact, investigation over a period of forty years has shown that there have been no periods of 'all-wet' or 'all-dry,' and that a wet St Swithin's has been followed by slightly more fine days than wet.

How, then, did the superstition arise? The history of St Swithin himself does not, at first sight, throw much light on the matter. He was bishop of Winchester in the 9th century, and a reputed friend of King Alfred the Great. He died in 862, and his body was buried outside the cathedral. A hundred years later he was canonised, and it was thought more fitting that he should be buried inside. But the saint apparently preferred to lie among ordinary folk outside and so, the legend goes,

he caused it to rain for forty days, so that his body could not be moved—a doubtful point, as authorities state that it was reinterred inside in the cathedral.

There is a similar legend attached to St Cuthbert. He was buried at Lindisfarne, but, when the Danish raids grew serious, the monks fled, taking his body with them. They wandered through Northumbria, seeking another place of burial, but, each time they attempted to settle, it proceeded to rain. At last, they came to Durham. The rain stopped, and they understood that this was the place where the saint desired to rest. In spite, however, of a similarity between the legends, St Cuthbert never became a weather-saint.

Outside England, St Swithin is unknown. In France, his place is taken by St Médard, whose festival falls on June 8th. There, the saying runs:

*S'il pleut pour St Médard,
Quarante jours de temps bousard,
On tiens des récoltes au hasard.*

('If it rains on St Médard's Day, there will be forty days of bad weather, and the harvest will be in danger.')

St Médard has a wide sphere of influence. He is known also in Holland, Belgium, and Germany—

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*Was Sankt Medard für Wetter hält,
Solch Wetter auch in die Ernte fällt,*

and as far east as Czechoslovakia, where there is a saying: 'The hood of St Médard drips for forty days.'

The French and German rhymes show that St Médard's forty days were regarded as equivalent to the harvest period. To see this in its true perspective, we must remember that, in England, eleven days were taken out of the calendar in 1752, and similar reforms occurred in other countries. Thus, St Swithin's Day would fall on July 26th, and St Médard's Day on June 19th, according to our reckoning, bringing the period over which the saints ruled into close relation with the harvest season. In England, the traditional day for beginning the corn harvest was Lammas Day, August 1st. In France and southern Germany, it was, of course, considerably earlier. It was the time of year when the farmer would most anxiously scan the signs of the sky.

There is no obvious reason why St Médard should have become a weather-saint. He was bishop of the Vermandois in the 6th century and played a leading part in the conversion of the Franks to Christianity. When he died, his body was buried in the village of Croiac, pending the completion of the cathedral at Soissons, where it was afterwards borne in procession, and reinterred with great pomp, apparently without protest from the saint himself, though shortly afterwards he was regarded as the patron of the crops.

St Médard and St Swithin do not stand alone. In the north of Germany, and along the Baltic seaboard, the Day of the Seven Sleepers, June 27th, is supposed to govern the weather for forty days, or seven weeks. In Finland, St Olli's Day, July 29th, is what counts, and in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark the tradition is attached to the dog-days, which coincide roughly with the period governed by St Swithin—'If the dog-days go in with rain, it will keep on raining all the time.' Certain districts also have their own special saints, and even as far away as Greece there is a saying that if it rains on the Day of Pentecost it will rain for forty days.

IT is easy to account for the importance attached to the weather-saints whose days coincide roughly with the beginning of the

harvest period. The problem of explaining the origin of the superstition is complicated by the fact that the folklore of Europe, and of Germany in particular, includes other days connected with weather-forecasting, which occur all round the year. In central Europe, Candlemas, Epiphany, and March 10th, the Day of the Forty Martyrs, are of moment, not for rain, but for frost.

The widespread nature of these traditions suggests that they go back to very primitive times, that they are part of the common heritage of European folklore. The number forty, too, has a special significance in ancient reckonings of time, and has magical associations.

It is when we examine the legends linked with many of these weather-saints that we get a clue to the origin of the tradition of the rain or the frost curse. The theme of reinterment is common to the stories of St Swithin and St Médard. It appears again and again, in varied forms, in relation to the other weather-saints. The Seven Sleepers are said to have been seven brothers, who hid from their pagan persecutors in a cave, where they fell into a long sleep, from which they occasionally re-emerged 'to refute the heresy of them that deny the resurrection of the body.' Cold, heat, and water play a part in the legend of the Forty Martyrs, forty young soldiers of Sebaste who refused to deny the Christian faith and were exposed on a frozen lake. After their death, their bodies were cast into a furnace, and the ashes were then thrown into a river, from which they were recovered and kept as wonder-working relics.

A curious legend attaches to St Matthias, a frost saint revered in the south of Germany. The relics of the saint were being carried round a town when the procession was attacked by robbers. In their confusion, the bearers dropped the shrine, which fell to the ground. It melted the ice with which the ground was covered, the earth opened to receive it, and closed over it again.

THERE is another strange sidelight on the story of St Médard. He is sometimes represented along with St Gildard, who is said to have been his twin-brother. In the south of France there is another pair of weather-saints, the martyrs Saints Gervase and Protace, whose bodies were exhumed by St Ambrose and buried in the cathedral which

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he founded at Milan. They were popularly identified with Castor and Pollux, the Heavenly Twins. Czechoslovakia also has a pair of weather-saints, Saints Cyril and Methodius, two brothers who played a part in converting the Slavs to Christianity.

'There is a widespread belief,' says Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, 'that twin children possess magical powers over nature, especially over rain and the weather,' and he goes on to describe a rain-making ceremony practised among the tribes of South Africa, when the body of a twin, who has been buried in a dry place, is dug up and reinterred near water. In Europe, the intention would usually be to avert rather than to induce rain!

The picture begins to take shape. These traditions seem to go back to primitive weather-magic, in which the disinterment of a body, which might be the body of a twin, played the leading part. After the conversion of the peoples of Europe to Christianity the Church placed its own interpretation upon these ceremonies, which became attached to saints of the Christian faith. Whether the ceremonies of disinterment and reburial were

practised in order to bring good weather, or whether the legend came to be attached to persons whose bodies were reinterred for other reasons, it is impossible to say. It is easy to see how, in settled agricultural communities, the importance of the corn harvest gave a special significance to the harvest-saints. The Scandinavian peoples were the last to be converted to Christianity, which perhaps explains why Sirius, the dog-star, never yielded place to a Christian substitute.

It is a strange story which is embedded in the tradition of St Swithin's forty days—one that owes nothing to observation or common-sense, but which has its roots in primitive weather-magic and in beliefs that go back to the beginnings of human history. It is part of the common folk-tradition of Western Europe, and as folklore it should be judged, not as casting sunshine or shadow over harvest or holiday. The day may come when meteorology can take the place of St Swithin. Meanwhile, let him rest in peace, unconscious of cyclone and anti-cyclone, trough and deep depression, and the infinite variety of the English climate.

Symbiosis Observed

H. G. SOULSBY

THE aquarium looked remarkably attractive with the delicate-green fernery of the water-plants serving as a background to the quick-flashing colour of the fish. Under the subdued light two red ramshorn snails, like rubies, crept imperceptibly up the glass side, removing with their rasping tongues the faint-green algae which were beginning to appear. The plants, mostly *vallisneria* and *myriophyllum*, with good roots in the silver sand, had spread and flourished like a miniature tropical jungle. Where a narrow shaft of sunlight streaming through the curtained

window was striking the plants a stream of tiny oxygen bubbles rose to the surface. In one corner, half-buried in the sand, lay a large freshwater mussel, its valves pulsating regularly as it siphoned through its gills the detritus of the sandy bed, retaining all the organic matter that came its way—a living water-filter.

There were seven fish in the tank, swimming at different levels and moving constantly. Four were English native fish—two carp, slow ponderous creatures; and two rudd, graceful, silverine, and quick. The fifth was a beauti-

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fully proportioned goldfish from Italy, of impressive girth and rich colour. It was the king of the aquarium, and a bully, and its appetite was insatiable. The two smallest fish were relatively new to the tank and had come from Central Europe—bitterling by name, and, according to those who had eaten them, bitter to the taste. But they were pretty little fish, and when the light was just right you could almost see right through them, the line that ran from gill to tail shining like blue phosphorescence.

They were all members of the same vast family of fishes, the Cyprinidae (carp), and had lived in harmony, except at feeding times, for nearly a year. However, things were changing. Of late the initiative had passed from the big goldfish to the smallest fish in the tank—the male bitterling. He had acquired a vigorous, aggressive energy, and his eyes glittered like little red jewels. He harried the other fish incessantly, charging them head on, and herding them to the end of the tank remote from where the mussel lay blowing in the sand. Even the female fish did not escape his fury, but with her his tactics were different: he seemed intent not only on segregating her from the others, but also on herding her into the mussel's corner.

It was spring, and a curious change had taken place in the appearance of the female bitterling. All the winter there had been visible a minute protuberance situated just in front of her anal fin. As the warm days came this stump started to grow in length until it trailed behind her, a yellow flexible wisp, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long—as long, almost, as the fish itself. This was her ovipositor, or egg-laying tube, and she was nearly ready to use it.

Then came a day when the fish began to swim in a strange manner around and about the mussel, sometimes in horizontal, and sometimes in vertical, circles, the female coming so close that now and then her ovipositor brushed the side of the mollusc's shell. These gyrations continued for several hours, until the female succeeded at last in casting her egg-tube over the gaping valves of the mussel. Instantly, the tip of the tube became caught in the suction stream of the inhaling valve, and in a matter of seconds a number of eggs slid down the tube into the mussel's interior, lodging in the gill-cavities.

Meanwhile, excitement was mounting in the little male: now he was chasing away an inquisitive carp, now darting this way, now

that. Then the female, her egg-laying over, swam slowly to the surface, imbibing the bubbles of oxygen that rose constantly from the delicate leaves of the myriophyllum. As she moved away, her mate dived down to the mussel in a graceful arc, there he hovered a moment, quivering a little, then with a flick of his tail he disappeared behind the foliage at the back of the tank.

The inhalatory water in the vicinity of the mussel, now charged with milt from the mating fish, began to circulate through the mollusc's gill-cavities under the action of its valves; and so the eggs were fertilised.

The eggs hatched quickly inside the mussel's shell. Soon the embryo fish appeared, stowed neatly like sardines in a can, and after thirty-two days some were big enough to leave their foster-mother to start their own separate existence. At irregular intervals during the next few days seven small fry were discharged from the mussel, shot out of the siphon like projectiles. They were about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch in length, and, except for the two black eyes, almost transparent. This fact helped them to escape their many enemies, among which, it was sad to reflect, were their own parents.

The young bitterling were equipped at first with yolk-sacs, giving them the pouting appearance of a high paunch. The food that they were thus provided with made them independent, for a few days, of foraging, but the yolk-sacs hampered their movement so much that two of the seven were soon caught and eaten, one by its male parent and the other by the goldfish. Another, malformed from birth, survived only a few hours, being then consumed by a ramshorn snail. The four survivors found sanctuary in the thick vegetation provided by the myriophyllum, and grew quickly, feeding on the minute infusoria in the water of the aquarium.

THE freshwater mussel, or, to give it its scientific name, *anodonta*, had been introduced from a pond in southern England into the aquarium during the spring of the previous year. At the time of its capture it had been gravid with a large number of its own fertile eggs. During the following months the eggs had developed until in the autumn numerous minute mussels had emerged, each complete with a hooked beak and a sticky, thread-like filament, called a byssus. By means of the byssus the little molluscs had

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hung on to the inside of the parent's shell, nourished by the contents of the water circulating through the system of the adult.

The time came when the mussel was nurturing not only her own young, but fostering also the young of the bitterling. Then, about a fortnight after the last bitterling fry had been discharged, she began to throw off some of her own small mussels.

Unlike the mature mussels, whose only form of locomotion was the slow laborious crawl through the mud and sand by means of the muscular foot, the embryo molluscs could swim for short distances by clapping their valves vigorously together. They had been provided with this faculty in order to obey a strong instinctive urge—that of finding a host in the shape of a small fish to help them to attain their full development. It was then that the bitterling were made to pay for the services rendered to them by the mussel.

The young shellfish that emerged from their parents' valves were too many to count. Not all of them reached maturity—perhaps not five per cent. Many of them were eaten by the goldfish, several died and were cleared up by the snails and shrimps, which were the scavengers of the tank. Some, however, were luckier: they managed to fasten themselves by their hooked beaks on to the sides of the first unwary fish that came within their limited range of movement. The carp and rudd, as well as the bitterling, were infested in this manner, but the big goldfish escaped entirely.

The parasites were irritating to the fish, and for several days the fish tried to divest themselves of them by rubbing their flanks against a sharp-sided stone and by diving obliquely

down into the sand at the bottom of the tank. But all efforts to shake off the unwanted guests failed; the fish's skin had swollen up, forming a cyst-like covering which protected the mussel, so that few of the parasites were dislodged once they had taken a firm hold of the fish. The fish soon became accustomed to their presence, however, and for the next three months the little molluscs battened on to their hosts, feeding on the tissue and growing visibly larger. Then in June, some twelve months after the eggs had first formed inside the parent mussel, the young ones began to break out of their sacs near the fish's gills, and drop into the sand, there, like the bitterling fry, to begin an independent existence.

WHEN such a transaction as was observed in the aquarium is of mutual benefit, as in this case it so clearly was, it is known to biologists as 'symbiosis.' Chambers's *Encyclopaedia* defines the word as: 'a biological term . . . to denote an intimate, internal, mutually beneficial partnership between two organisms of different kinds.'

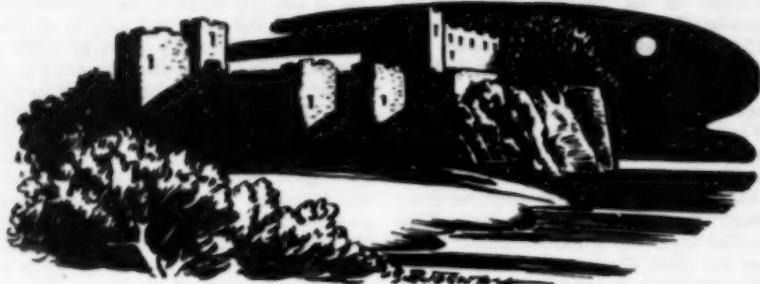
Tate Regan, one of the foremost authorities on the fishes, has said that the bitterling-mussel partnership is one of the most interesting known cases of symbiosis. This is because it is the only case of symbiosis that lends itself readily to simple observation. It is, however, curious to reflect that if all the freshwater mussels in existence were suddenly to die the bitterling would be extinct within a few years, so dependent has it become upon the mussel for spawning.

Country Holiday

*There is an end here to the driving days.
The nervous tom-tom tempo of the town
has changed to sleepy rhythms, and the greys
and blacks of smoke-grimed streets that frown
up at the sky to laughing green and brown.
The corn is misted with a yellow haze.
High on the purple hilltop, like a crown
the sun rests tranquilly and weaves its rays
among the fraying cloud. The world's at ease
here where the love-lorn linnet sings a spate
of love-songs to its mate, chromatic bees
hum and each leaf becomes articulate.*

*I must go back soon to the city's press
and panie, to the labour and the strain,
and wear again the drab grey prison-dress
of my ambitions. If they prove but vain
and profitless, I know that I possess
the certain sanctity of this domain,
the sleepy solace of its timelessness.
My feet will find me that same lane
that led me here, and sadly I will lay
aside my broken hopes, forget the gloss
of dreams. This valley's old philosophy
will mock me and make little of my loss.*

TOM WRIGHT.



The Laming of Alasdair Ban

A. M. KAY

A SHORT distance downstream from the stepping-stones at the ford, Glenshelister river narrows into a natural lade and flows on to tumble steeply over a rocky gorge into a wide pool in a wooded dell. There, close to the waterside, are the ruins of an old meal-mill, with a single gable-end rising from a ruckle of stones in the bracken, one millstone lying prone in a bed of nettles and the rusted ribs and rims of the water-wheel peeping amongst ferns and brushwood screening the brink of the fall. The rutted track that leads down from the main road through the woods and into the dell is now half hidden by the grass of many seasons, for it is long since the last cart carried oats along it to the mill and returned, creaking and lurching back uphill, heavily laden with sacks of freshly-ground oatmeal.

One afternoon in early summer I followed the track to the riverside and stood beside the pool recalling past times when the wheel turned and splashed in its niche under the fall and the busy grumbling of the millstones rumbled through the woods like a rumour of distant drumming. Now there was stillness except for the rushing of the waterfall, the chattering of the stream lapping on over the shallows, and a rustling of leaves astir in the

bland breeze. Although I had been looking forward to revisiting that scene, its derelict, lonely aspect struck chill, and I soon turned away to continue my journey, glad that I was bound to keep a cheerful tryst with my friend Mrs Gillies, the housekeeper at Glenshelister Castle.

The pungent scent of hawthorn wafting from the trackside copses reminded me that they used to be notable for a profusion of the rarer, red variety and that Mrs Gillies, who shares my memories of the mill in its brave, busy days, would be glad of some of that for remembrance; so, from a bush rife with pink buds promising presently to burst into rich red, I cut a few choice branches and, with these in my hands, regained the main road. There in the sunshine I began to repent my lapse into sentimentality, feeling shy to be seen by passers-by laden with a burden of blossom, and, besides, the thorns on the stems were pricking my fingers rather painfully. However, as it happened, I had the highway to myself, and at the bridge that carries the side road over the river to the Castle drive entrance I gathered some fronds of green bracken, and, wrapping my hawthorn in these, reached the main doorway without serious loss of dignity, or blood.

THE LAMING OF ALASDAIR BAN

THE bright eyes of the bonnie lass who showed me up the steep stairway to the housekeeper's room in the turret twinkled at me and my bouquet, and I fancied a hint of giggle in her tone when she announced me as: 'Someone for you, Mrs Gillies—a gentleman, with flowers.' But when my friend welcomed me in with all her usual warmth, I forgot my, somewhat silly, embarrassment and was glad I hadn't come empty-handed. 'Oh!' she cried, 'you've been in the mill dell, haven't you? And fancy you bringing me hawthorn from it too! Man, you can't be as blate, or as proud, as you whiles make out if you carried that all the way here in broad daylight. I'm always glad to see you, and you look better than ever when you come keekking through hawthorn sprays, and red hawthorn at that! All the same, I'm just a wee bit disappointed, for when Effie cried that it was a gentleman with flowers for me I thought for a minute the clock had been set back and I had an admirer on my doorstep again, as many's the time I've had in my day.'

'I wasn't so far wrong there, says you. Imphm, perhaps you are an admirer of mine—you that's so keen on relics and antiquities! Anyway, you're not the first or the only one to bring me flowers to-day. These roses in my Blarbuie bowl there on the window-table were given me not an hour back by my latest lad, wee Dugie, Campbell the gardener's youngest, and one of the nicest sweethearts I ever had, though he's only six. And giff-gaff maks guid freens, as they say, so you'll take the roses with you when you go, with admiration from me to your far better half. Oh, Effie'll put them in a box so that you'll not be shamed carrying them on the public road, for I doubt you're terribly bashful about fetching flowers to your girl-friends, judging by your blushes when you handed me the hawthorn—or was it climbing my steep stairs, at your time of life, that reddened your face?

'Draw your chair into the window-nook where you can look out over the trees to the sea while I put the roses elsewhere out of the sun and set the hawthorn in the bowl instead so that we can enjoy the sight and scent of it as we have our crack and gossip. Tuts, these thorns are that sharp I've gone and scratched my pinkie! And, mercy on us, I see you've been in the wars too, for your clean hankie's all bloodied! Open that drawer beside you and get out the wee first-aid box and some plaster, and you and I will tend our wounds

together the way I daresay our forebears hereabouts often had to do in the wild times of the Clan fights long ago.

'There we are, all nicely sorted, and these aren't the first scarts you and I have had from the thorns of the mill dell bushes, though it's a good while since I ventured down there. Between you and me, and don't let it go further, yon track's got a bit too much for me of late. But when I was a girl in Blarbuie we bairns had many a hurl in the carts taking corn to the mill and happy times yonder at the riverside while we waited for the grinding to be done, scrambling among the rocks and bushes or sitting quiet to watch the wheel plowtering round under the waterfall. Even then the mill was old, and it's been out of use and in ruins these many years, more's the pity, for we don't get meal nowadays to compare with the real, home-ground kind my generation was reared on.

'You think you remember that Glenshelister meal too, do you? Well, I keep forgetting you're not that far behind myself for age, and perhaps you did taste a spoonful or two of porridge made from it—in your infancy. Anyhow, we'll not be arguing about that. There was strife enough in the past over the mill and its meal; and indeed your hawthorn and our bit bloodshed from its thorns have reminded me of one old tulzie that concerned both and ended on what's now the shrubbery down there under this very window. I hadn't forgotten promising you a while back that I'd tell you about the laming of Alasdair Ban, of Carsaig in Knapdale, and a kind of ancestor of yours and my own. So you needn't be thinking how clever you've been to set me off again into my anecdoteage, for I had it in mind before you came in, and your hawthorn only pricked my memory!

'HEARING about Alasdair will maybe be sore on any pride you still have in your Highland blood, for, if all stories are true, he was scarcely a credit to the Clan and connection, although he's said to have reformed in his old age. Myself, I doubt whether he was really as wild and wicked as some make out. Like many another decent body, as he aged he liked to gloat over and magnify the misdoings of his youth; and his share in what the old ones used to call "the oatmeal battle" was told by himself at the fireside in the hearing of those through whom the story came down

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to me by word of mouth, and in the Gaelic, of course.

'Alasdair was an orphan, brought up by his grannie in Carsaig, for his mother died at his birth and his father was lost at sea soon after. As a lump of a lad he went to the herring-fishing out of Loch Sween in a boat owned by his Uncle Angus, a douce, godfearing man, whose good example was wasted on Alasdair, who, by his own showing, was ripe from the very cradle for any devilments and mischiefs he could find or stir up. He had tales to prove that, but the one I'm on now begins when he would be about twenty, in the early months of the year 1745; and I needn't remind you that year and the following one were sad and sorry times for Argyll, and indeed for all Scotland.

'That spring the Knapdale and Kintyre herring-boats sailed to the fishing south'ard of the Mull o' Kintyre and off the Irish coast, and with them went Uncle Angus's coble manned by himself and Alasdair and two other lads. The weather was seasonably rough and dirty, and one dark, misty night when the boats were riding at their nets an English man-o'-war, a frigate I suppose, suddenly appeared among them and ran into the Carsaig coble. She went down like a crushed egg-shell, but Alasdair and his uncle managed to jump and scramble into the frigate's bows, though the others were never seen or heard of again. The ship's people hauled the rescued pair aboard and were concerned and kind to them that night. In the morning, when they were off Carrickfergus, the captain gave Uncle Angus some money and sent him ashore in his own gig, wishing him the best of luck in finding his way home. But Alasdair, being a strong, likely lad, was kept and pressed into the King's service after the fashion of the time.

'As you'll know, life in a man-o'-war was then hard and rough, and the discipline savage enough to daunt even the likes of Alasdair, used as he was to hardship at sea. At first he tried being dour and impudent, but he soon had the sense to settle down and take things as they came, keeping a civil tongue in his head and working well with his shipmates. Many of them were fisher lads who, like himself, had been 'listed without please or thank you, and amongst them was one Archie Macmillan, an Islayman who'd been lifted off his father's croft near Bowmore in the previous backend. He and Alasdair spoke

the same brand of Gaelic, and after a while they got to be as thick as thieves.

'Old Alasdair's story was that the frigate's captain soon noticed what grand fellows he'd got in Archie and himself and would have liked fine to make officers of them over the poor Englishmen. But in spite of that the pair had other notions, and when, after some months' cruising abroad as far as Spain and the English Channel, the frigate was ordered back to patrol the Minch and the coast of Argyll they got a chance to do what they wanted. One day the frigate put into Loch Crinan for water, and as soon as it was gloaming the two of them managed to slip overboard, swim ashore near Duntroon, and make off into the woods towards Kilmartin. They must have been a sore loss to the captain, but no search was made for them, and the frigate sailed next morning leaving them free to follow their own devices.

'BEFORE long the two were wondering what to devise and do, and thinking they'd maybe jumped out of the frying-pan afloat into the fire ashore. The countryside was in a turmoil, with news and rumours of the war that was going on. Every main road seemed to be full of the King's redcoats marching to the drum, or with country lads in companies bound for Inveraray to join the Argyll Militia and fight for the Duke against one they called, in the Gaelic, *Tearach Og*—that's young Charles, the Prince, or the Pretender, whichever you like. Alasdair and Archie had heard aboard the frigate of this stramash, but they were still in the damp remnants of King George's rig, and, though they were game to fight on any side for a good offer, they decided to keep to the heather till the best offer came up.

'Their first needs were food and a change of duds, and when they reached a clachan near the ford of Loch Awe they found both. It was a Sunday morning and all the folk were in the kirk, and the manse was empty, without a door steeked; so in they went and found a baking of bannocks, plenty of milk, a braxy ham, and breeks, coats, and bonnets belonging to the minister and his man—and they were fed and clad and away over the next hill, carrying the remains of the bannocks and the braxy ham, before as much as a dog barked at them. At dusk that day, however, when they were in the Pass of Melfort, their

THE LAMING OF ALASDAIR BAN

luck wasn't so good, for there they stumbled into an encampment at the burnside where a score or more of wild, trowsy characters, in various tartans and all armed to the teeth, were gathered round a fire, and, before they could cry out, four big, powerful fellows sprang on them out of the bracken and dragged them into the firelight with the knife at their throats.

'However, when they were allowed to explain who they were and had offered the braxy ham for the pot and a plug of navy tobacco for the pipes, they were let loose and, to cut old Alasdair's tale short, accepted into the band with threats of a dirk in the ribs if they should try any capers of escaping. The rascallions made out to be of the Prince's army, foraging for food, chiefly oatmeal, which, as you'll know, was then the main diet of fighters on both sides, and scarce at that. It's in history that John Campbell of Mamore, one of the King's generals, who later became Duke of Argyll, made a great name for himself by clever contriving to collect meal for the garrison of Fort William when it was beset by the Clans, and by that just about won the war. Well, this troop Archie and Alasdair had fallen in with were out to seek and take any such supplies in that part of the shire, and, having heard there was a store of oatmeal in Glenshelister mill, were going there to get it before it could be carried away by General Campbell's soldiers.

'Next day the raiders were in the woods about the dell yonder getting ready to attack the mill, and Archie and Alasdair, in their borrowed duds and with arms in their hands, were, according to old Alasdair, among the leaders. But, after all, the mill didn't need any attacking. The miller at that time, one Duncan Morrison, a wise, cautious body and no fighter, was in it alone except for his old wife, and the door was open as if the world was as much at peace as he was, smoking his pipe at the fireside. And when the foragers burst in Duncan didn't jee his beaver, but gave them good-day and assured them there wasn't a grain of meal of any kind in the place, which they found was true.

'It had all been carted to the Castle for safety, and Duncan told the intruders that, but he didn't mention that the guard of red-coats and Militia were then away with a convoy of earlier millings to Dunstaffnage, whence the meal would be shipped to Fort William; nor did he let on he had sent a lad

running to the Castle with warnings that a raid might be expected shortly. The laird of the day was serving in command of a company of the Duke's Militia, and her ladyship, with a few old men and womenfolk and bairns, was left to guard the Castle, and the oatmeal. However, she was by birth a Campbell, and no softie either; the walls were as thick then as they are now, and the doors and windows a deal stronger, and there was the river looping about the knoll there for moat; so, altogether, the place would be hard to crack open unless with cannon balls.

'THE Prince's fellows weren't just a pack of robbing rovers. They had been marching and fighting and skirmishing for months and were bold, besides knowing many a trick of war; so they sat cannily down beside the mill and sent scouts out to spy about the Castle and see what the chances would be for an attack. The report came in that the oatmeal was there sure enough and not a soldier guard to be seen; and at that the band waited only till the moon had risen and then set off to try their fortune by surrounding the Castle and creeping up on it through the brushwood that then covered the knoll almost up to what is now our main doorway.

'According to old Alasdair, it was then that he and Archie proposed a plan. They would go boldly up to the door, without arms and, dressed as they were in the Lochaweside minister's duds, pose as peaceable travellers seeking shelter; and then, if the door was opened to them, the rest could rush in and do the job with little bother. That seemed good to the leaders, and away went my bold lads to try the trick. But when the honest travellers came chapping at the door the answer they got was a musket-shot and a plain warning, in Gaelic and English, that they'd maybe live longer if they went further and left decent folk quiet in their beds.

'With that, some of the lads in the bushes loosed off their firelocks and pistols, while Archie and Alasdair bolted back under cover close up to the door in what's now the shrubbery down there below this window. It wasn't a window then but an arrow-slot that had been widened into a loophole for muskets, and this turret-room was manned that night by her ladyship and one or two of the serving lasses. For arms they had her ladyship's pistols and an old blunderbuss that the laird

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used mostly for scaring birds off the corn-stocks; but it was well loaded that night with a good charge of powder and shot, and, as Alasdair later declared, a handful of nails as well!

'He may have been right there, and he certainly had reason to know, for, when he and Archie were careless enough to move in the bushes just as the moon peeped out from a cloud, bang went the blunderbuss from the window loophole here and he got some, or most, of the charge in his leg and was sure it had been shot clean off him! Before his mates could pick him up, a drum began to dunt from the woods along the Inverlochan road and, thinking it was beating time for the soldiers on the march, all hands made off over the stepping-stones at the ford and away as fast as they could travel. They didn't know her ladyship had sent her young daughter, Susan, and the miller's messenger lad into the woods with an old drum that had been hanging on the staircase wall since the 'Fifteen, telling them to start beating it whenever they heard gunshots round the Castle and so make the raiders think troops were coming to the rescue. Allow her ladyship—she wasn't a Campbell born without having notions of ways to win battles by other means than plain fighting!

AT daylight one of the dogs found poor Alasdair in the bushes and he was carried indoors and, as you'd expect of folk like ours, tended and cared for, enemy though he was. His wounds took long to heal, and he was still hirpling about with a stick when the war, or the rising if you prefer it that way, ended. And when the laird came home, like the frigate's captain he took quite a notion to Alasdair, heard his history and forgot the bit about him deserting from the King's ship and found work for him as soon as he was able as boatman for the Castle. A great gentleman that laird was, and the father and grandfather of the finest lairds Glenshelister ever had. And that's no disrespect to our present one, Reuben P. Macmaster Muller, who got the property by purchase when he came here from Florida in the States and would like fine to be able to prove his descent from that one who was so kind to Alasdair Ban.

'Yes, as old Alasdair himself used to tell, his fortunes turned for the best that night he was lamed by the shot in the shrubbery out

there. He had his ups and downs, but after a while as boatman he got a holding above the Blarbuie shore yonder where he could look from the hill south to Knapdale and Carsaig Point. By then he had a wife. What man of you could say he was fortunate without one? And he hadn't seen the last of Archie Macmillan either, for that one turned up after many years, when they were both getting old, and settled in a croft near Alasdair's holding to end his days. After the oatmeal battle Archie's luck wasn't so good, for he fell in with another pressgang on the shore in Appin and had to spend the best years of his life in the King's ships, serving mostly in far, foreign parts. However, he came out of all that without a scratch and with a petty-officer's pension and a stock of yarns, some of which old Alasdair got his bad reputation by telling as his own.

'Here's Effie with the tea-tray. That's a clever girl. Take the Blarbuie bowl off the window-table there and set the tray on it. Don't you wish your lad would bring you red hawthorn from the mill dell, or roses, the way my admirers do for me? Yes, I see you've brought the oatcakes I baked for this decent man's tea this forenoon, and scones and butter, and bramble jelly. Thank you, dear, and if we need more tea or hot water I'll give you a cry. And will you find a box and pack the roses in it for my friend here to carry home? He won't be going for a while yet, so you can take your time—unless you're in a hurry to get out and keep a tryst with one of your regiment of lads!

'Didn't I tell you who Alasdair got for a wife? Oh, she was one of the serving lasses that defended Glenshelister Castle in the oatmeal battle, her ladyship's personal maid, and her name was Phemie McIntyre. She was one that nursed Alasdair better of his wounds and gave him an arm to help him hirple about the grounds till he could manage alone. Of course, she was sorry for him, as many a woman is for the poor creatures of menfolk they marry, hurt or whole. And she had more excuse for that than most, for it was her that loosed off the blunderbuss through that window when it was a loophole that night when Alasdair Ban was lamed. So he limped through the rest of his days, with Phemie for his wife and helper; and though everybody then in the Castle knew who fired the laming shot not one of

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them ever let the secret out, least of all Phemie herself, wise woman!

'Aye, Alasdair and Phemie reached a good age together and had their good times and their bad like other folk. Their descendants are now scattered about the world, mostly far enough from Glenshelister, and, though you and me have a remote connection with that pair, we're not really of their blood. All the same, I like to think of them as kinsfolk—especially Alasdair—and I'm glad that I once helped to do something for their memory.

They lie in the old burying-ground yonder in Blarbuie, and once long ago now, when I was a lump of a girl, I went there with a Canadian lady, who claimed descent from them, to help her plant on their grave a bush of hawthorn from the mill dell. Last time I saw it it was in full blossom, red blossom, like yours there in the Blarbuie bowl. So is it any wonder that the sight and the scent of hawthorn reminded me to-day to start blethering and telling you the story of the laming of Alasdair Ban?'

Sweden Goes Underground

A. J. FORREST

LESS than forty years back man deemed himself sufficiently protected from the anger of his fellows if he could hide himself, shoulder-deep, in earth. Mostly, as armies of men in khaki and field-grey knew to their valour in Flanders fields, it was mud and not earth which was their misery and security. Yet, in to-day's momentously combative world, to surround oneself with five or six feet of soil or mire is to court certain destruction in the face of the atomic-bomb's awesome power. Instead, ten or more times that thickness of solid rock overhead is desired, or, as the Swedish engineer Olof Eklund of Falun calculates, a room in order to be atomic-proof must be covered by a thickness of rock equivalent to one and a half times its width.

Nowhere on earth at the present time, I think, is a nation so conscious of the advantage of digging in to atomic-security levels as Sweden. In fact, the intensive concentration of Swedish industry and defence resources in underground channels has been the outstanding surprise of my recent 2000-mile tour through Scandinavia.

Since the Second World War ended, the Swedes, who are excellent tunnellers, have

carved out no fewer than 15,000 new rock-enclosed air-raid shelters. Each one is built, I am told, according to atomic-proof specifications. In Stockholm, three giant caverns with a joint capacity for 32,000 persons are nearing completion. 'The city that swims on the waters,' as the Nobel Prize winner Selma Lagerlöf so finely described her capital, is lucky in having granite as the bedrock of her gleaming loveliness. Parts of these new caverns, too, are already fulfilling valuable commercial needs, serving as supplementary garages, as seven-storeyed warehouses; and in Gothenburg an enterprising firm by building an underground air-raid shelter for public use has acquired the lease of it as a hotel annexe throughout the duration of peace.

In this movement Sweden's A.R.P. ardour is matched by that of Norway and Denmark, but with one essential difference—the Danes, owning few rock-outcrops, are forced to build their shelters pepperpot-sized, each accommodating some fifty persons, and constructed with reinforced concrete. The Swedes, however, are carrying their seek-refuge-in-the-rock policy to far-reaching spheres of everyday activity. Already, in their vast and

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Wellsian-furnished atomic-bomb-proof vaults, tunneled out of granite or gneiss, their specialists service military and civilian aircraft factories, munitions works, radar and other instrument manufactories, emergency headquarters for all fighting commands, and nerve-centres for the entire complicated apparatus of civil defence, from subterranean fire-stations, hospitals, laboratories to first-aid posts, decontamination stations, and even a sewerage-disposal plant. Nor does that exhaust the list of their new rock-protected interests. Here we have the spectacle, astonishing in its intricacy, of a nation burying itself step by step in the conviction that by such action it can thwart any foreseeable calamity.

This policy is sane enough. Although the Swedes on general mobilisation can muster an army 600,000 strong, throw into the skies a fighter air force second only to Britain's among European nations in strength and efficiency, and put good ships and submarines into the Baltic, they could never repel, unaided, the attack of a power like Russia. But by their underground strategies, and clever dispersal throughout the south-eastern peninsula of their leading industries in rock fortresses, they could, it is thought, hold out long enough to receive the desired help from other nations before the aggressor could gain mastery.

I SPENT a morning of fascinating interest inside the underground factory of Sweden's leading navigational-aid manufactory, the AGA company. It lies tunneled at ground-level in a mass of dry granite on the island of Lidingö. I reached it by taking one of the firm's steamers from the quayside, just outside Stockholm's National Theatre, and steaming before daybreak through serpentine but streetlamp-lit waters for about thirty minutes. Mr Olle V. Lidbeck led me first down a curved entrance-way, the naked rock-walls of which were painted white, and brought me at once into the newest department, where a plant for making liquid oxygen now hums with life.

The walls are concreted in, white-painted, and the ceiling white also, the air sweet and clean, and the atmosphere, I thought, persuasively hygienic, a little clinical, perhaps, in some aspects. Experience has taught these Swedish firms that the roof of a cavern, when

freshly dynamited, remains alive for a long time. It must first be shaved, that is, the projections cut clean, cracks probed, if not sealed, loose bits withdrawn, and then the entire roof screened off by an auxiliary metal ceiling to act as cover against rock-falls. Some roofs, six months after their tunnelling, have shed pieces up to ten tons in weight. Such slabs can cause more than a headache to workers and managements!

In another department, floored by beautifully-stained boarding, but clinically white, like the other, Mr Lidbeck showed me submarine periscopes in the making. To certain hush-hush rooms, adjoining, no stranger could be admitted. The workshops here are 15 metres deep in the hill's belly. 'Our great advantage,' my escort said, 'lies in the dryness of the granite; there is no drip or water percolation anywhere. At first, we built mock windows, and placed bowls of flowers in them, but the flowers soon died, so this effort to simulate natural atmosphere had to be abandoned.' For the first few weeks the firm found it wise to let all workers enjoy a thirty-minute breather in the fresh air outside during their day's shift. Now, however, both men and women here are used to internal rock-working conditions, and no refresher is needed. I saw no particularly pallid or sickly faces among the workers. Indeed, one Italian bench-operator was of so healthy a complexion that I marked him down at once as an advertisement for a Mediterranean sun-tan. And he had worked here eighteen months!

As is common experience in Sweden's subterranean factories, staffs must initially endure a breaking-in period. Throughout it they are liable to record a heavy incidence of minor illnesses, chiefly headaches, eye-strain, nervousness, and exceptional fatigue. Frequent outdoor rests are then an essential palliative. But workers soon, it seems, grow inured, and come to like their neon-lit cave-life. After three months—the period, of course, varies with individuals—they tend to become less susceptible to contagious illnesses, particularly influenza and pneumonia, than their co-workers in tree-encircled factories and laboratories 'upstairs.' One explanation, perhaps, is that the worker inside the rock is highly health-conscious, and expert aid, at the least sign of distress, is always at hand. Oddly enough, however, workers here are proving to be more static, less prone to change their jobs or seek new employments, than the

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average of men aboveground. So these 20th-century troglodytes, bred by a delightful, highly-civilised country with very enviable living standards, appear now well-grounded in health and stability!

In the Bofors munitions works at Karlskoga all the more vital armaments production is now conducted in rock-recesses protected by double detonation-doors and guarded air-vents. The very latest air-conditioning, artificial-sunlight, and temperature-regulating plants are installed. During summer as well as winter all belowground thermometers register 68 degrees Fahr. In such an atmosphere the human being, in Sweden anyway, is most happily efficient. This firm is so proud of its amenities underground that, periodically, it invites the wives of new employees to tour selected subterranean shops, and so return home pleasantly satisfied with their menfolk's working conditions. The normal risks of industrial accident cannot, of course, be eliminated, but fire risk is especially slight, for if an outbreak occurs, it should be easy to shut off the air-supply. The blaze, starved of oxygen, then dies of suffocation.

GIANT excavating projects are readily undertaken. At Linköping, just over five million cubic feet of granite have been blasted out to make a subterranean aircraft-factory. It occupies two distinctive floors. To service it, workers have to travel by escalator, elevator, and tunnel-car. The whole factory is split up into nineteen air-conditioned compartments.

Great care is needed to survey with precision any mass of rock earmarked for tunnelling operations. Damp pockets within can play havoc with plans, and some granite, hard enough on the surface, may be brittle, spring-ridden, bog-pocketed, or otherwise treacherous in its interior. Hard, dry, and solid are the basic qualities necessary, all three, for preference, consistent throughout the mountain's mass. Then Swedish rock-drilling equipments leap into action, firing 640 charges in the rock-face at a split-second interval—this super-speed timing is needed to avoid shock-waves—and so tunnelling forward, some sixteen feet per firing for each machine-crew.

Perhaps the most amazing project is the drilling in water of the Kilforsen power-station on the Ångerman river, a complete hydro-electric power-unit, which, by 1955, will be creating light from the earth's bowels. The machine-room lies 185 feet below surface-level. The maintenance squad travels to it, fly-like, by a Diesel electric-car, moving along the tunnel's roof above the swirling waters below. And the plant's equalising-chamber, soon to be finished, is grandiose enough to hide inside it a five-storey building. To date, 2·2 million lb. of explosive have here served to shift 53 million cubic feet of rock.

Sweden lacks oil, but thanks to another of her research workers, Harald Edholm, she is now able to convert disused mines into first-class oil-storage chambers. In these mines—the first so used was a derelict feldspar mine on the east coast—the oil rests on a cushion of water, through which it does not and cannot sink; the mine's base is sealed. Then surface water, dripping from ground-level, presses down upon the mine's oil-level, and actually caulked the oil in the mine.

Under these conditions, oil, experiment proves, retains its natural heating quality more effectively than when it is stored in metal tanks or cylinders. To convert this feldspar mine into an oil-storage chamber Edholm's company had to lay out £241,000. To store a similar volume of oil in metal containers their capital outlay would have been, I am told, at least seven times greater. Petrol, too, is storable indefinitely under similar conditions.

Sweden is vowed to neutrality. Her troops, valiant soldiers by tradition, since they last engaged in battle in 1814, may be said to lack practice. But by the exercise of the greatest ingenuity—I find no other phrase more justifiable—Sweden in dedicating herself to peace is making assurance doubly sure, and is securing the future of her prosperous seven million inhabitants by creating this phenomenal series of atomic-bomb-proof and beautifully-equipped rock-chambers, caverns, and caves. How fortunate she should count herself as a nation grounded, fundamentally, on rock, and not a land, like Holland, for instance, spread out on mud-flats and peat-beds rescued or stolen from the sea.



Salmon-Fishing in Iceland

R. N. STEWART

THERE are two ways of travel to Iceland—by air or by sea. By air, the journey is soon over—seven hours from London airport or four and a half hours from Prestwick, but this method has several disadvantages. Only a limited weight of baggage is carried free, any excess has to be paid for, and the excess-luggage tariff is a high one. Anglers' gear is heavy, and, though we often take more than we need, this is a better policy than to find oneself by the river's bank minus some essential piece of equipment. It is true that the angler can arrive at the airport wearing his waders and brogues and with his pockets full of fly-boxes—and can say that this is the dress he usually wears when setting out upon a journey. It has been done by one angler, and he got away with it, but on this occasion the airport officials were so startled that, before they had recovered, the plane had left with the angler aboard. I am not sure that the subterfuge would work a second time.

Another disadvantage of flying is that there is no pleasant opportunity in a plane, as there is on a ship, to discuss the merits of any river with fellow-anglers, or, for those on a first visit, of learning from the past experience of other fishermen who have been there before.

By sea, the journey takes two and a half days' sailing from Leith. The ship is comfort-

able, well-found, with good cabins, an admirable service, and excellent food. But it is true that the sea can be rough, and bad sailors have to forgo many of the amenities the ship has to offer.

On arrival in Iceland, there are the usual immigration and customs examinations to be gone through, but neither examination presents any difficulties to a visiting angler, both being, indeed, mere formalities.

It will probably be essential to spend a day in the capital, Reykjavik, but this need not be looked upon as a hardship. There are many interesting things to see there, quite apart from the general view of the way of life in a new country. However short a time the visiting angler has to spend in Reykjavik, he should see the Einar Jónsson Museum.

THE river we shall fish is a north coast one, a day's journey from Reykjavik. In Iceland there are no railways. Inland travel is by car or bus, and to reach the river there is a road journey of over 200 miles. Some saving in distance can be made by taking a coastal ship to Borganes, a passage of three hours, but on a first visit more of the country can be seen by going by car all the way. The return journey can be made by the coastal route.

SALMON-FISHING IN ICELAND

The road to the north crosses a number of salmon-rivers, and the sight of them adds to the enjoyment of the run.

Roads in Iceland are not so well surfaced as are our own, and in consequence a lower average speed has to be accepted. After leaving Reykjavik, the first interesting place is Hvalfjordur, a long fiord protected by high, precipitous hills. This was an Allied naval-base during the last war and it is now the shore-station of a newly-formed whaling company. A short stop to see it is worth while, but it is a smelly place and it is as well to wear gum-boots if a close inspection is made. Dead whales leave much liquid residue whilst being cut up.

Beyond Hvalfjordur there are some miles of rather dull, flat country to traverse until the river Hvítá is reached. This is a large glacier-river running into the Borgarfjordur on the west coast. It has a prolific run of salmon and very many large, clear-water tributaries, some of which provide first-class fishing. There is a roadhouse here, and a stop for coffee is pleasant, allowing the passengers to stretch their legs and to see the river with its tremendous volume of opaque water.

After Hvítá, there are some further miles of flat uninteresting country before joining the main road from Borgarnes to the north. Soon after this junction the road passes through a lava-field, which, for those who have never seen one, is of interest. In the lava-field there are two good hotels, and in one of them luncheon is taken. It will be a good meal, but no choice of dishes is available; the traveller has to accept the menu offered.

Lava-fields begin and end abruptly. One moment you are in a maze of almost satanic muddle, the next you are clear in open and benign pasture. On leaving the lava, however, the signs of human habitation grow less and less and we find ourselves on a road passing through a sub-arctic tundra, climbing steadily to the approach of the pass which separates northern from southern Iceland.

After quitting the lava-fields, the road runs along the banks of the river Nordura. This river, a tributary of the Hvítá, is one of the best of the west coast salmon-rivers. It is a big river and, in its lower reaches, compares in width and volume with the Spey. The road follows this river to its source, which is a small lake fed by the permanent snows of the Trolljakirkja, a mountain whose name means 'Witches' church.'

In the past, though it is summer, snowdrifts from the last winter still lie by the roadside. At the summit there is a solitary hut, uninviting to the summer visitor, but placed there to give shelter to winter travellers who may be stranded. To these it must appear as a wonderful haven of refuge when seen through the blinding, wind-driven ice-particles of an arctic storm. To us, it is a rather ugly tin hut on a hill. Once the summit is crossed, a wonderful panorama of the first northern valley lies exposed. In this valley courses the river we shall fish.

It is an easy downhill run to the farm whose hospitality we are about to enjoy and we reach it in time for a welcoming feast of coffee, pancakes, and buns, of which the farmer's wife will insist we should partake. This is a ritual which must be endured. At this season haymaking has begun and everyone will be at work, but the arrival of strangers demands that labour cease and that the visitors be greeted by all members of the household, and a very pleasant welcome it is. These ceremonies will last an hour, and then the haymakers will drift back to their tasks, the anglers will go to unpack their belongings, and the farmer's wife will set about making ready the evening meal.

DEAR reader, we know the impatience that besets you. There, 300 yards from the farm, runs the river, visible only in parts because it flows between steep banks that it has cut for itself through the centuries.

The season's early run of fish, and the fish are certain to be there, are virgin fish, and the pools, with turbulent heads running out into smooth glassy tails, are as yet undisturbed by any angler's lure and are crying out, irresistibly, for our attention. The temptation to snatch the first tackle available and run helter-skelter to the river must be resisted. Some method and order has to be observed. These fish are no mean opponents and care is needed to make certain that when we set forth we are adequately armed. Further, we have accepted the delays of the journey, so a few more moments will repay their expenditure and ensure that all is ready for the first encounter.

It is the top beat to which we must go, as there is not time to go further afield to-night. A thousand yards above the farm there is an impassable foss or fall up which no fish can

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climb, but between it and the farm there are six pools, four of which are first-class water. Waders are essential, because we have to cross a big tributary and also the main river in several places. These garments are put on at the farm, and then, with quick yet cumbersome strides, we hasten to the bank. Below, lies the House Pool. This is a lovely-looking bit of water, with a nice rough stream at the head, a turbulent middle section, and a smooth tail. As a matter of fact, it is not always a good pool. It is not deep enough to hold fish in low water, but there are seasons when the place yields a fine return. We fish it without response. You, as the visitor, may feel disappointed that a piece of water looking so fishy should produce nothing. I, more experienced on this river, am in no way downcast.

We go up some 300 yards, where, lying among steep and, in some places, impassable rocks, lies Stock. This pool is certain to hold fish in any height of water, and on our approach a good one makes a boiling rise in the tail. We have to cross a tributary called Miklagill before we reach the pool. This stream is fast-flowing and its bed is strewn with big unwieldy boulders. It requires some care to cross it, not because it is deep, but because the fall is steep and the waters flow strongly. Once safely over, there is a sandy beach sheltered from the wind by precipitous rocks on two sides.

We have to fish the tail of Stock at an angle upstream, and careful casting and a quick recovery of line are required if we are to remain in control of the fly. The waters of Iceland are of a clarity unknown in our rivers at home and, as we approach the point where operations begin, it is somewhat disconcerting to see the fish lying in motionless ranks like guardsmen on parade. To one experienced in the ways of Icelandic salmon this moment is one charged with emotion. I know that at this season (early July), with virgin fish in the pool, one of them is going to take the fly, and the very fact that one has already given some demonstration of activity makes a certainty more certain.

The fly is cast at an angle upstream, and twice not unnoticed, but unappropriated, it passes over where the fish are lying. However, the third time is more than any fish can stand. The whole action of the rise is visible—a slow approach, a turn, and then a sinking action as the fish drops down to reassume his

lie. A tightening of the line, and now, no doubt, if doubt had ever entered the angler's mind—a slow, long heavy pull, and the fish is hooked.

The early fish in this river are not baby salmon, and our preliminary sight of the fish left no question that he was of a good size, possibly 20 lb. At first he is bewildered by the properties of the insect he has grabbed, as it behaves in a way unlike any other similar object of which he has any experience. But not for long—with a sudden rush he goes straight upstream, and we cannot follow him, deep water and impassable rocks ahead preventing this. Right to the top of the pool and 100 yards away he jumps clear of the water, but he does not attempt to leave the pool. Instead, he turns and, aided by the current, comes towards us like a torpedo. We have to exercise all our cunning and our reflexes to remain in control. Our stance is restricted by the rocks ahead and by the Miklagill behind. Many are the fish that have regained their freedom by the present manœuvre, but this fish is well hooked, and the many yards of slack line are retrieved, to find that he is still connected—perhaps slenderly—with the angler. There is no need to recount the playing of a salmon. It has been done so very many times before. Suffice it to say that this fish was landed, 22½ lb. of him—a very pleasing picture to eyes hungry for such a sight.

A second fish, somewhat smaller, is caught, and then back to the farm for the evening meal, for which it would never do to be late on the first night. Into the meal the farmer's wife has put all her skill and brought forth treasured titbits that she has been hoarding for the occasion.

In northern Iceland during June and July there are twenty-four hours of daylight, and, should you wish, it is possible to fish all through the twenty-four hours. There is, however, no advantage to be gained by doing this, and I never do so. So to a bed—without blankets. Their place is taken by an unquilted eiderdown, a form of covering that feels strange to those unaccustomed to adjusting it, but which is nevertheless deliciously soft and warm.

NEXT morning the second beat is explored. This consists of rocky pools alternating with rapid runs. The pools are deep—one of

SALMON-FISHING IN ICELAND

them has soundings of over forty feet; the runs are swift and shallow, perhaps three to four feet. All have precipitous banks or sheer cliffs on one side, and one, the famous Black Hole, has cliffs on both sides and can only be fished from a single stance at its head. Here the fish takes charge of the angler. The pool turns through two right-angles, and a fish once hooked always runs downstream out of sight round these two corners. It may be a hundred yards away without the angler having any idea what is happening. Every fish in Black Hole is an adventure, even if he weighed but a poor five pounds, and many a fish is lost here. The usual cause of the disaster is the line or cast being cut on the sharp-edged rocks at one of the two corners. However, it is surprising that any fish are landed, seeing the hazards that beset the angler.

From the house to the end of the beat there are no less than fifteen pools and runs and at this season of the year a basket of six to ten fish, averaging 14 lb., would be a normal result for the day.

The third or lowest beat is some distance away and, for comfort, requires the assistance of a pony to carry the angler to the river and the catch home. The beat is quite different in character from the rugged, rock-strewn bed of the upper beats. Now the river has entered the coastal plain, from whence it flows into the fiord leading to the Arctic Ocean. The banks are flat, the bed is of shingle, and the volume of the river has been increased by the addition of three big tributaries. There are seven good pools in this third beat, four of

them over 200 yards in length, and all have plenty of water no matter how dry the season has been. It is here that in August the best of the migratory-char fishing is to be had. These char are fine sporting fish and may attain 8 lb. in weight. Too much emphasis on recorded numbers and weights of other people's fish makes dull reading, but it might be said that it is no unusual event to catch twelve salmon and twenty-four char in a day on this beat.

A fourth beat can be contrived on one of the tributaries, but, though it holds a fair stock of salmon, there are only three small pools. The chief interest of this little river, called Sika, is the lonely grandeur of its valley. It is a torrent that has cut itself a bed 200 feet below the surrounding level. Its banks are for the most part cliffs, there are numerous waterfalls, and it is the home of many wild birds.

THE rivers of Iceland are not suitable for the infirm. No aids to anglers are to be by their banks. Their waters are just as they were before man came, and it is to be hoped that they will remain so, because therein lies much of their charm.

Should the opportunity present itself, a visit to Iceland is well worth while, but for those seeking salmon-fishing it is prudent to make arrangements some time ahead as there are very few rivers that have not been booked, and the competition for those still unlet is keen.

The Kingfisher

*The kingfisher has royal blood.
In coloured robes he flits about
As though the rainbow on the flood
Has scattered random bits about.*

*The little sparrows envy him
The green and gold of his array
As fussily they try to trim
Their duller fledges' disarray.*

*A spear, a torch, a lantern lit
Nigh willow-boles or under leaves,
So may you see the halcyon sit,
A wonder bird in wonder leaves.*

*The necks of iridescent bronze
That will on drakes the sun deride,
The snowy-laden wings of swans
No longer leave them wonder-eyed.*

*For they have seen him on the spray
Sunlit, a very sphere of light,
Or when upon his river prey
He plunges like a spear of light.*

WILFRID THORLEY.



Bloody Mary

PHILIP DRAW

SCANNING the notice-board of the club on my first visit after a return from leave, I caught sight of the following:

For Sale

BLOODY MARY

Kathiawar mare. 15-2. 6 yrs.
Sound in wind and limb.

Lives up to her name.
Going cheap to a good home.

'Come and look at this, Barbara,' I called to my wife. 'Somebody's honest, anyway. I wonder whether any poor mutt will risk it.'

'What's a Kathiawar mare, Phil?' asked Barbara, who was new to the country.

'That's where they come from. I understand they're very good ponies. They're usually dun with black points and have a dark donkey-stripe down their backs. I believe that they'll gallop on for ever. Someone once told me that they're inclined to have a will of their own, but I've never heard that they are particularly vicious.'

'Oh, do let's go to see her.'

'What's the use, Barbara? She'd be no earthly good to you. We'll find you a Waler before long that will do you proud for hunting.'

'Yes. But I want to see Bloody Mary,' she insisted.

Needless to say, we found out the owner and went to look at the mare. She was standing under a tree in the compound, waiting for us—a very likely-looking animal, with a small and intelligent head. Her colour was dun, as we had expected, and the dark donkey-line was very pronounced.

Her owner's remarks were not encouraging. 'You're not wanting her for your wife, are you?'

'No—yes—well, I hadn't really thought about it.'

'If you are, I'm afraid you're wasting your time. I'm not selling her to any woman. I don't want to be branded as a murderer.'

'Good heavens! Is she a man-eater?'

'No. She's mad. That's all.'

'How do you mean?'

'For six days she'll give you as good a ride as you'll get anywhere, but on the seventh it'll take two syces holding her to get you up, and when you're in the saddle you'll have to sit damned tight to stay there. I've had her for a year and she's no better than when I got her.'

'Could I try her?' broke in Barbara.

'I'm sorry, Mrs Draw, but I can't let you

BLOODY MARY

do that. So long as she's my property I can't allow any woman to get up on her.'

'Phil, you try her. Do. Please.'

'What's the good, Barbara? She's no use to us.'

'Please, Phil.'

Saddle and bridle were duly brought and it was with some trepidation that I approached Bloody Mary. However, she seemed in her best mood. She allowed me to rub her nose and run my hand down her legs without any sign of objecting. When I felt the girth, her ears went back and her head came round, but, after all, many horses will do that. I mounted and the syce stood back. We moved off quietly at a walk and, on the Polo Ground, which was just behind the bungalow, I put the mare through all her paces with no trouble whatever. When we got back, Barbara rubbed Mary's nose and generally made a fuss of her, which the mare thoroughly appreciated. That was my undoing. I knew it, although I would not admit it. We thanked the owner and left without committing ourselves, but there was no peace in the home until Bloody Mary had become ours for the sum of Rs. 150. The one stipulation which I was able to enforce was that Barbara would not take her out alone.

THE fun started a few days later. We were going out for our usual evening hack. Barbara gathered the reins and prepared to mount. The moment her hand touched the saddle Mary reared up on her hindlegs. Luckily Barbara's foot had not reached the stirrup. Then the mare started squealing and striking with her forelegs. Both the syces rushed at her, but Barbara ordered them away. I slipped off my pony and ran in to help. As the mare landed on her forefeet, Barbara flicked the reins over her head, but she would not hand them over to me. She kept close to the mare's side and out of reach of those pawing hooves, and she used her voice until, eventually, Mary calmed down. Then she passed the reins over to me and made much of Bloody Mary, who now stood snorting and showing the whites of her eyes, but with her ears cocked.

'Hang on a minute, Phil, I'm going to have a look at the saddle,' said Barbara, and she slipped it off and carefully examined the lining. 'Nothing wrong here. I'll put it on again. The girth may have been galling her.'

But at the approach of the saddle the rodeo started once more and Barbara had no chance of putting it on. When we had succeeded in calming the mare down again we had a careful look along her back and round her girth, but could find no lump or gall which could have given her the slightest pain with the pressure of the saddle. However, another attempt to saddle her produced the same result.

'It must be the saddle,' said Barbara. 'Ram Lal, go and get a blanket.'

This was carefully folded and put on the mare's back, and, for the third time, Barbara tried to saddle her, but she would have none of it. 'This is ridiculous,' cried Barbara, her patience beginning to wear a bit thin. 'Very well, if she won't go with a saddle, she'll go without it. Get a surcingle.'

As soon as this had been placed round the blanket and girthed up, Barbara vaulted on to the mare's back. Bloody Mary was obviously taken by surprise. For a moment she stood irresolute, with her ears back. Then, as Barbara's legs closed on her sides, she moved forward at a walk. 'Get up, Phil, and come on quick, before she changes her mind,' called Barbara triumphantly. I joined her on my pony before she had reached the gate, and we went for our usual hack round the country. There was never a protest from Bloody Mary.

'There must have been something wrong with that saddle,' said Barbara as we got back to the bungalow. 'Ram Lal, get the saddle.'

The offending pigskin was brought. Ram Lal removed the blanket, whilst Barbara put the saddle on the mare's back and girthed up. We had a very careful look to see whether there was any undue pressure by saddle or girth, but found nothing wrong. And all the time the mare stood quite peacefully while we were fussing round her. Then, before I realised what she was doing, Barbara was up again, and took Mary for a gentle trot and canter round the compound. 'Poor thing,' was her remark when she came in again, 'perhaps she is mad after all.'

AFTER that we always had a blanket and surcingle ready for Mary's next performance, and it invariably answered its purpose. But we were soon to learn that the mare's moods were not confined to the time of leaving her stable. On this occasion I was the sufferer, because Barbara couldn't go out, and we had made it a rule that one of the two

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of us would take Mary out every day. We were not leaving her to be exercised by the syce.

I was cantering quietly along one side of the Brigade Parade Ground when I decided to pull up and walk. The moment Mary felt the bit she propped. Luckily she kept her head up, or I would most certainly have gone over it. Then she started to back. Turn her as I would, it made no difference. She just went on backing. As we had a clear field of about five hundred yards in any direction, it didn't matter, but I was glad that there was nobody about, because I had no great desire for us to be seen. It was a most undignified performance. I have not the infinite patience of Barbara, and, after a few minutes of this, I set my teeth and said: 'If you want to back, back, — you.' With that I pulled her head into her chest. Immediately I did so, she stopped, raked at the bit, and tried to move forward. It seemed that reverse controls were required. This was not easy. She had to be given enough head to move forward, while, at the same time, I was pretending to rein her back. However, by degrees I got the knack of it and we proceeded more or less under control. Gradually I could feel her moving more naturally and, before long, her ears came forward again and we were trotting and cantering as if nothing had happened.

In the bungalow Barbara and I discussed the matter, but came to no conclusion. It was the first time that the mare had shown any resentment against her bit and there seemed no object in changing it, especially as it was made of rubber and a most innocuous appliance.

To my consternation, the next time Barbara and I went out together I noticed that Bloody Mary had on a halter with a single rein buckled to it and no bit. 'You're not taking her out like that,' I exclaimed.

'Yes, I am,' replied Barbara.

'You'll be carted.'

'Perhaps,' she answered coolly. 'There's the whole of India to be carted over, so it can't do much harm.'

This appeared to me but small consolation, yet Barbara has an influence with animals which I have never met before or since, and I trusted to it. When we reached the Polo Ground she said: 'Wait here a minute, Phil, while I do some schooling.'

I watched her while she did figures of eight at the trot and canter, using her legs, balance,

and neck reining. The mare answered perfectly. She moved with her head up and her ears cocked, as if she were enjoying every minute of it. Finally Barbara brought her back to me across the width of the ground at an all-out gallop. I thought she was going to knock me endways, and so did my pony, who became distinctly jumpy, but she pulled up under perfect control five yards from us. A mixture of apprehension and pride kept me tongue-tied.

As we continued our hack, Barbara propounded her theory. 'I refuse to believe that Mary's mad,' she said, 'and I've been thinking and thinking what it is that upsets her. It obviously isn't discomfort, and it isn't vice, because she's normally so friendly. So I've come to the conclusion that it must be boredom. That set me on another train of thought. Why should she be more bored than any other horse that's taken out hacking regularly? And then I thought of you.'

'Thought of me! What have I got to do with it?' I asked, a little nettled at being bracketed with Bloody Mary.

'How would you like to be made to go for a walk every day instead of playing games or riding? You'd be bored stiff, wouldn't you?'

'Yes. I confess I would, but . . .'

'That made me ask myself what games would Mary play if she could, and the answer was pretty obvious—hunting, polo, or racing. Hunting hasn't started yet, and racing is off anyway, so I thought I'd try her on the Polo Ground, and it looks as though I'd found out something about her. She's certainly handy enough. I believe that she has played polo and likes it.'

'But you don't play polo without a bit!'

'No. That was a different line of reasoning. I didn't want to give her an excuse to play the fool.'

Not being players ourselves, we borrowed a stick and ball and made a habit of preceding our hacks by knocking the ball about on the Polo Ground. Then, one evening, Barbara decided that a further step must be taken in Mary's education. She took the polo-stick as usual, and I the ball, and we set off, but, instead of making for the Polo Ground, we turned off in the direction of the Grass Farm. Immediately there was trouble. When Mary found that she could not face the Polo Ground, she started to back. There was a convenient wall handy, and Barbara backed her into it. At that she started to rear up on

BLOODY MARY

her hindlegs. This frightened me, and I called out: 'Chuck it, Barbara. Let's go on the Polo Ground.'

'She's got to learn,' came the answer. 'Throw the ball down in front of her.'

I threw the ball, and immediately Mary started to follow it. Barbara, with her stick, took it along quietly until we got into the open country. Then she gave it a good smack and we cantered after it. Of course, it soon got into a lie from which no polo-stick could have moved it. 'Let's try without it,' I said as I dismounted to pick it up.

'Righto,' said Barbara. So it was lifted and we continued our hack without it and without any ill effects on Mary's behaviour.

The next stage was to take out the stick and ball without using them, and eventually we left first the ball and then the stick behind.

IT was inevitable, in a small station, that our doings should be known and discussed. In spite of our choosing unfrequented routes for our riding, many people had met us going out and returning, and some, at least, had seen Mary giving one of her rodeos. So long as we avoided the club, nothing was said, but when, gaining more confidence in Mary's behaviour, we finished up one day outside the club verandah, there was a certain coolness in the air. We took the precaution of sending the syces away at once, and watching them out of the gate, so that there could be no regrettable incidents with other people's ponies, but in spite of this there were a few muttered remarks, which we may or may not have been intended to overhear. The only thing to do, of course, was to ignore them, but it was depressing to feel ourselves being cold-shouldered, and I believe that, had it not been for the Taylors, we might have given up altogether.

They were a Gunner Major and his wife, who had given both of us every encouragement as soon as they saw that we really meant business. They were interested in the mare and had great admiration for Barbara's handling of her. Although they had never come out with us, we frequently dropped in at each other's bungalows and discussed progress. Very shortly after we had sat down on the club lawn they joined us. 'We've just passed Mary going home good as gold,' called out the Major as he came across. 'She's coming along very well.' We were soon

discussing horses in general and Bloody Mary in particular, and our peace of mind returned.

'We start hunting next month,' said the Major, who was also Master of the local Hounds. 'Are you coming out?'

'Not yet,' answered Barbara. 'I haven't got as much confidence in Mary as that yet. She might get in one of her moods and I feel that that would put me off for ever.'

'Now look,' the Major replied, 'our opening meet is on the 4th. I think you're right not to come to that. There'll be a hell of a crowd of horses and a good many of them not under control. But you've got to start some time, and the sooner the better. What about coming out with us for exercise next Thursday? There'll be just you two, the hunt staff, and myself.'

'That'll be marvellous,' said Barbara gratefully. 'What time do you want us at the kennels?'

'I don't want you at the kennels,' answered the Major with a twinkle in his eye. 'It's not that kind of exercise. I want you to meet us at the fourth milestone on the Lakanadoon road at seven sharp.' With that he and his wife got up and went into the club. For a moment we were too astounded to speak. Then I said: 'The old sportsman! He's going to give us a day's hunting.'

'He's a darling!' cried Barbara.

AT half-past five on Thursday morning we were woken up in pitch-darkness by a sleepy bearer. Half-an-hour later we met in the dining-room, where tea and biscuits were ready for us. I noticed that Barbara was wearing breeches and boots instead of her customary jodhpurs. 'Good heavens! What have you put those things on for?' I asked with typical early morning tactlessness. 'There'll be no one out except ourselves.'

'They're more adhesive,' was the curt rejoinder. 'Any objections?'

'Sorry. None,' said I, crushed.

The horses came round, looking enormous in the light of the hurricane-lamp on the verandah. Barbara held up her hunting-whip for Mary to smell, and she snorted at it, but it was a snort of inquiry, not of alarm. Then we were off on our four-mile hack to the meet. We reached the fourth milestone just as dawn was breaking. Soon we heard the sound of hooves coming down the road, and then we made out the Major's well-known figure, with

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the hounds at his horse's heels, and Alec and Tom, the two whips, behind.

'Good morning,' the Major called as he neared us. 'Stand still where you are, please,' and with that he led his hounds right up to us so that they were all around and between the horses. 'There's a good mare,' he went on, as Mary reached down to smell at the hounds. 'Don't hold her, Barbara. Let her head go. She'll not hurt them. Look, her ears are cocked!'

Like all good huntsmen, the Major had complete faith in and sympathy for horse and hound. But how many would have taken the risk with an animal of Mary's reputation? It was broad daylight now and, after a few moments, the Major spoke again. 'Now let's see what we can find in that patch of sugar-cane over there,' he said, pointing. 'We'll draw it away from the road. They always break that way. So you two had better stay this side of it.'

When hounds went into the sugar-cane Mary stood still with her ears cocked and her head turning from one side of the covert to the other. Then a hound spoke, followed by another, until the morning rang with the music of the pack. This was too much for her. She started raking at the bit and plunging in her excitement. But Barbara's calm voice and the give and take of her hands held her until Tom's 'Gone aw-a-a-y,' followed by the sound of the Major's horn, gave us the signal for which we were waiting. Mary's progress was a series of great bounds rather than a gallop, and the thought of Barbara's 'adhesive' boots made me grin. She certainly needed them. At first I thought that she was going to be carted, but Mary gradually settled down to a gallop and, by the time that we had caught up with hounds, she was obviously under control.

About a mile further on, hounds were led into another patch of sugar-cane. We stayed on the near side of it, Tom and Alec went to the far corners, while the Major rode in. Mary seemed to have worked off steam and, apart from fidgeting, stayed fairly quiet. After a few moments the jackal was pushed out, to be bowled over by the pack in the open within a few hundred yards. We galloped up to the kill. Barbara dismounted and made much of Mary, who was showing her excitement, but behaving perfectly well.

'Well, how's Bloody Mary?' asked the Major, coming over to Barbara.

'She's not Bloody Mary any more,' replied Barbara indignantly. 'She went like a bird, and I don't think she'll ever give any more trouble. I can't thank you enough for to-day.'

'Don't thank me. I've enjoyed it as much as you have. You've got a good mare there, Barbara. You've made her, and she'll do you well. Glad to see you out any time you care to come, but I should give the opening meet a miss if I were you. Give other people a chance of getting used to her.'

As we walked quietly back to cantonments, Barbara's cup of happiness was full. She had gained Mary's confidence and completed her education. A little later we went to an advertised meet of hounds and the mare went as well as on the first day. She gave no trouble with the other horses. As we rode home, the first person to come up and congratulate Barbara was Mary's former owner, and I asked him the question which had been in my mind for long. 'Where did you get her?'

'A Pathan horsedealer,' he replied. 'He came up from the South on his return to the Frontier. Bloody Mary . . .'

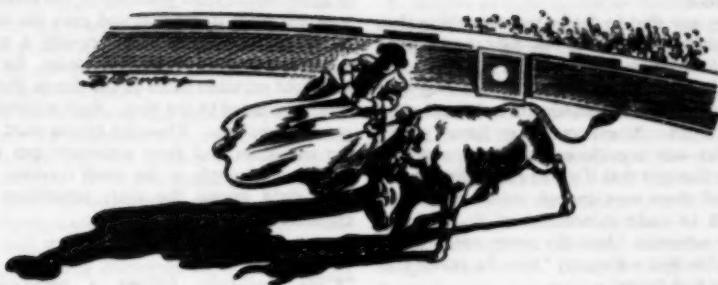
'Mary,' put in Barbara firmly.

'Sorry. Mary was the only animal that he had left that looked like a horse. He was riding her himself and pretended that he didn't want to sell her, and put the price up considerably. I bargained with him and knocked his price down a good bit, which pleased me. I thought I'd got her cheap, but soon found that I'd bought a packet of trouble. All the same, I couldn't help liking her and I would have put her down sooner than let her go to anyone I couldn't trust.'

The next time we met the Taylors, Barbara recounted this conversation. 'That explains a lot,' remarked the Major. 'Have you noticed that she has a brand on the near shoulder? It's very faint, but I looked for it the moment I saw her.'

'I noticed the mark,' replied Barbara, 'but never realised that it was a brand. What is it?'

'She comes from the stud of His Highness of G——. He breeds nothing but the pure Kathiawar strain. She's blue-blooded is your Mary.' He chuckled as he went on. 'I wonder how that scallywag of a horsedealer got hold of her. I bet he didn't buy her.'



Watching My First Bull-Fight

J. M. MICHAELSON

THE first question any English-speaking tourist in a big Spanish city is likely to be asked is 'Have you any dollars?', and the second, 'Do you want a ticket for the bull-fights?' The great majority of tourists visiting Spain probably answer 'No' to the first question and 'Yes' to the second. Bull-fighting is regarded by foreign visitors as Spain's most characteristic sport, although, in fact, association football is probably now more popular, and I found that waiters and shop-assistants were more anxious to discuss England's football eleven than next Sunday's bulls.

But bull-fighting is as peculiarly Spanish as cricket is English. The drama of the bull-ring can never mean quite the same to a foreigner as to a Spaniard, for the bull-fight dramatises and symbolises the Spaniard's unique conception of honour, as cricket at Lord's expresses the Englishman's ideas of 'playing the game.' Most foreigners go to bull-fights out of curiosity rather than in the hope of being thrilled or entertained—but they go at least once. Their reactions are rarely what they expected, and are seldom those of disgust. Some find bull-fighting dull, others simply a brilliant spectacle spoiled because it involves death. Very few become *aficionados* or fans, and many, I think, do not

derive the enjoyment, or at any rate the interest, which they might because they go to the ring completely ignorant of the purpose and rules of bull-fighting.

All who think of visiting Spain should read first some explanation of bull-fighting, so that at least they know what it is all about. Ernest Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon* is a brilliant history, explanation, and commentary, even if it leaves the impression that great bull-fights are a thing of the past. Because I felt that a holiday in Spain without seeing a bull-fight would be to miss seeing at first-hand what everyone was ready to argue about, I accepted the hotel-porter's offer of a seat at sixty pesetas, about twelve shillings at the current tourist rate of exchange.

OFFICIALLY, the seats at the bull-ring range in price from five to forty pesetas, the price varying according to the position relative to the ring, and, even more important in Spain, where the sun can be fierce even at five o'clock, the usual time for bull-fights, according to whether the seats are in the sun or the shade. The explanation of why a good seat costs double its face value is that the tickets pass through many hands and it seems easier to get tickets from a hotel-porter, a

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waiter, or even a shoeshine boy, than at the box-office.

They say that in Spain the only thing that ever starts on time is a bull-fight, and I went early to have a look around. Already, an hour before the starting-time, the ring was surrounded by thousands of animated men and women. As everywhere in Spain, plenty of police were in evidence, and I felt comforted by the thought that if a bull really did get out of hand there were enough machine carbines present to make mincemeat of it. Perhaps, as we advertise 'Join the army and see the world,' in Spain they say 'Join the police and see the bull-fights.'

In a courtyard the picadors were exercising their horses. The animals were not quite the sorry nags I had been led to expect, and I presumed the exercise in the great heat was intended to make the horses less lively, since the function of the horse in the bull-fight is to act as a target. The horses' eyes were already bandaged to accustom them to the darkness and their bodies covered in thick mattresses and leather aprons. These coverings are now compulsory to protect the horses, although the experts say the reform was really introduced to protect the audience from the nauseating spectacle of a horse being disembowelled.

Presently the matadors, banderilleros, and others arrived ready dressed, sweating in the heat. Crowds of small boys mobbed their cars, as in Britain they gather round the players' entrance at sports stadiums. The faces of the men were intent, as if already they were concentrating on the duels with death just ahead.

It was time to find my seat and, having been warned, I hired a cushion, for even the expensive seats are merely stone steps. As a matter of fact, my forethought was wasted, for the first time I rose to my feet to see more clearly someone whisked away the cushion and I sat for the rest of the afternoon on the stone!

The ring was like a compact football-stadium, with fifteen thousand people packed round the strong barrier, in which there were two gates, one for the bulls and the other for the men and horses. A water-cart was finishing its task of wetting the sand. The band could hardly be heard above the sound of thousands all talking hard. Fifteen thousand programmes and fans fluttered in the air as the waiting audience tried to keep cool.

Five minutes after the advertised time, which in Spain means strict punctuality, the president took his place in his box and gave the signal to start. The entire cast—actually a much more appropriate word than team, for the bull-fight partakes more of the drama than of sport—paraded in the ring. Each saluted the president in turn. Then the horses went out, the matadors and their assistants put their cloaks and swords in the small corridor that runs right round the ring, separating the audience from the barrier.

THE bull-fight follows a well-ordered pattern, almost a ritual. The bull enters the ring, full of aggression, head high, eyes bright, ready to charge and smash anything living that challenges its supremacy. There is a flash of a red cloak near one of the little safety-boxes against the barrier and the bull charges across the ring, only to be baffled as its target slips into the box, which is, in fact, no more than a stout wooden barrier with space between it and the real barrier wide enough for a man to enter, but too narrow for a bull.

Two or three times the bull is enticed by the flash of a cloak and makes its headlong charges across the ring. Then the matador takes over, drawing the bull to him with his large cloak, moving so that the animal slips harmlessly by. The matador at this stage, perhaps, does not pass the bull so close. The bull is still fast, only too ready to attack almost without provocation.

At a sign from the president, the trumpets blow and the second stage starts with the entry of two picadors on horses. They carry a heavy pic or lance, with a guard on it so that the point cannot penetrate far. Their exposed foot as they ride round the inside of the barrier is covered in armour. The bull has its attention drawn to the horse, and it charges. The pic is driven into the neck muscles as the bull reaches the horse. Sometimes the picador cannot hold the bull off and it reaches the horse. Man and horse are tumbled over, and one realises the extraordinary strength of the bull as it lifts them off the ground.

This was the part I expected to make me feel sick, but I am bound to admit that in none of the fights I saw did the horse seem hurt more than it might have been in a fall at a steeplechase. There was none of the disembowelling one reads about, although once

WATCHING MY FIRST BULL-FIGHT

the bull's horn showed crimson. The horses all left the ring under their own power, somewhat to the disgust of the crowd, who hurled abuse particularly at one picador because he held off the bull with his pic and would not let it reach the horse.

The trumpets sounded again. It was time to place the banderillas. A dart in each hand, the banderillero runs towards the bull, inciting it to charge. There is a wonderful calculation of angles, a body-swerve worthy of Stanley Matthews, and, just when it seems that man and bull must meet, the bull passes by the man, two long decorated darts buried in its neck.

The purpose of all this has been to tire the bull and to make it carry its head lower. Now the trumpets sound again. The matador puts aside his cloak and takes up his sword and muleta, a comparatively small red cloth with a stick to make holding it out easier. He dedicates the bull and proceeds to play it. He seems to hypnotise the animal, calling it to him, making a series of passes in which the bull's horn comes half-a-dozen times within an inch of his body. At the end of the passes the bull is so bewildered that the matador can even turn his back on him in safety.

The bull is now a very different animal, his breath coming short, his head no longer held high. But he is still an extremely dangerous animal, capable of killing with a single sideways sweep of his horns. The matador takes his sword out of the muleta where it has been helping the stick, and prepares for the kill. This is what the Spaniards call 'the moment of Truth.' There can be no faking. In the previous parts of the fight showmanship can to some extent cover up lack of courage—or willingness to take risks. But for the kill the matador must draw the bull close to his right side with his muleta and then go in over his horns with the sword, at the same time passing along the animal's side to avoid the horn, which, if lifted a foot, would pierce him in the neck.

The bull collapses and dies. Gaily-decorated horses enter to drag out the carcass. The crowd cheers or boos according to its estimate of the skill and courage of the matador, hurls hats and bunches of flowers into the ring as he goes round to take his bow—or cushions if he has made a mess of it. As this last gesture means sitting on bare stone for the remaining fights, you can appreciate how strongly the audience feels!

THAT, in a nutshell, is a bull-fight. It was neither as thrilling nor as bloody as I had expected, and this, I think, is the reaction of many people visiting the bull-ring for the first time. I have seen much more blood at a boxing-match. The actual thrills are apt to be far apart, although they come with breathtaking suddenness. A matador makes an apparently safe pass, misjudges the distance, and is sailing in the air. Or the bull knocks him down and is preparing to gore him as frantic assistants try to distract it. In the seven bull-fights I saw the matadors were caught three times. Once the bull ripped a man's leg—he dusted himself down and went on. The man sent sailing in the air seemed to land without being hurt and the bull's attention was distracted. The matador knocked down was saved by the bull's mistake—it was over-eager and the horn intended to gore him hit the sand an inch in front of his body; by the time the bull was ready for a second stab its attention was distracted by a cloak being flapped before it.

The disappointment is, perhaps, that everything happens so quickly. The wonderfully graceful poses you see in photographs pass in a fraction of a second and it is as hard for a foreigner to judge their perfection as for a Spaniard to judge the correctness of a stroke at cricket. But even a novice like myself could see that some things were done better than others, that sometimes the matadors were afraid, very afraid, and that at others they excelled themselves in the beauty of their movements and in their courage. The bull was never afraid—or, more correctly, only one bull was afraid and he turned the whole fight into a rather nauseating spectacle, something like a novice at boxing getting a thrashing. But normally the bull remained confident to the end, sure he could deal eventually with what opposed him. You evidently cannot have good bull-fights with bad bulls.

My feeling was that, carried out to perfection, the bull-fight is a spectacle, or more correctly a tragedy, of great power. When anything is done badly, however, it is either brutally crude or ludicrous, as when, in his haste to escape, a matador dropped his sword and muleta. It seemed like clumsy butchering when a poor matador required four swords to kill his bull. The crowd were as vocal in condemning clumsiness or apparent cowardice as they were generous in their roar of appreciation at a skilfully-performed series of passes.

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They were completely gripped by the drama of men deliberately toying with death. I was sufficiently objective to be able to hear that the collective intake of breath by fifteen thousand people as a bull jumps the barrier or as a matador is tossed sounds just like an explosion.

I carried away some mental photographs that will always stay with me—the look on the matador's face when he had been tossed and decided to go on and kill his bull; the tragedy of the sudden realisation that comes over the bull a moment before its death that it has lost, that it is not going to destroy its enemy. My first bull-fight was an experience—but not one I shall repeat. The price paid in life and risks is too great, I feel, for the emotions aroused, and I prefer my tragedies on the stage, where there is only simulated death for men or animals.

There are a surprising number of Spaniards who share this viewpoint, I discovered. But there are others who find an irresistible fascination in toying with death—give them a chance

and they would gladly go into the ring themselves to prove their manhood and honour. Within seconds of the last bull being dragged out, the ring swarmed with small boys charging, passing, and 'killing' each other, and when bulls are 'run' in the streets there is no lack of amateurs willing to risk their lives with them. The bull-fight may be cruel in that an animal is killed to provide emotion, although in this sense it is no crueler than hunting or angling—and what proportion of the spectators at speedways secretly hope to see accidents? It is certainly not cowardly, for it calls for perfect control of nerves and muscles and courage. The Spaniards say it is the only sport in which a man decides for himself how close he will come to death.

My own feeling is that any tourist in Spain should see a bull-fight. He need have no fear of being sick, although he may be bored. He will probably not want to go again, because few foreigners are able to get the sense of high drama which the bull-fight provides for the Spaniards.

Challenge and Response

Survival of a Community under Borderline Conditions

ROY BRIDGER

IN his penetrating study of the genesis, growth, breakdown, and disintegration of civilisations Professor Arnold Toynbee has demonstrated that the principal factor in the emergence of a new civilisation is the stimulus of challenge. It is not under unusually easy conditions of life that progress is made but in circumstances of strain and adversity. The challenge which is presented may, he shows, take one or more of five forms: difficult environment, migration and the breaking of new

ground, attack, external pressure, and the stimulus of penalisation.

In *A Study of History* he points out that the Hellenic civilisation was born not in the deep-soiled Boeotian lowlands but on the stony ground of Attica. In the struggle for the North American continent the South appeared to possess all the advantages, yet the prize fell in the end to the settlers of the bleak New England states. Again, the stimulus of migration, particularly of sea-voyages, has

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given rise to virile new settlements—for example, those of the Vikings in Iceland and the Saxons in Britain.

But the challenge does not always evoke a response. Sometimes the terms are too severe, and the effort is beyond human powers. There is a golden mean, below which conditions are too favourable to provoke new efforts and above which they are too severe to leave room for consolidation.

The Confederate States lost the day to the hardier North, it is true, but Maine, the northernmost state of all, was unable to profit thereby: its environment exacted too hard a price from its settlers and the state has remained a museum-piece to this day. The Viking civilisation flowered brilliantly in the harder Icelandic conditions attained after a migration from Norway, but the law of diminishing returns came into operation when the seafarers pushed on to Greenland: the settlement was a failure.

Responses to challenges of an order of severity on the very borderline between the degree that affords stimulus to further development and the degree that entails defeat have been made by the Polynesians, the Eskimos, and the nomads. The first achieved an audacious *tour de force* in performing their thousand-mile Pacific crossings in frail, open canoes, but they succumbed eventually to the intolerable tension, and resigned themselves to their particular isolated islands. The Eskimos grappled heroically with the Arctic environment, yet the rigid conformation of their lives to the annual cycle of the Arctic climate has imposed too exacting a timetable on them to allow of other advances. The nomad likewise is not the master of his surroundings, but the slave, a prisoner of an annual climatic and vegetational cycle.

IN Scotland are to be found many illustrations of the triumph of human endeavour over environment and other circumstances, especially in the Western Highlands and Islands. The story of the colonisation of the Scoriaig peninsula, in Wester Ross, provides a perfect example of challenge and response. In this case the challenge presented was eviction. In the 1830's the forefathers of the present inhabitants were compelled to vacate a fertile strath to wrest a home and a livelihood from the poor stony ground of a windswept peninsula.

This virtual island, approached by land only by a rough track, protrudes into the Minch and is subject to strong winds and heavy rain. The stones and boulders which even to-day make ploughing a difficult and hazardous operation are just a fraction of those covering the ground when the crofts were first laid out.

The homeless people slept in the heather at first. They had few possessions and little money to purchase initial equipment. The supreme necessity, however, evoked an iron determination and an energy which attacked the boulders and split them, made them into dykes to separate the 3-acre crofts, and into drains, byres, and houses.

The solely agricultural tradition was abandoned. The settlers took to the sea—in itself no mean achievement—and the sea saved them. By 1890, when the Crofters Commission visited the place, Scoriaig was a thickly-populated community of crofter-fishermen, with its own boat-builder, blacksmith, carpenter, and weaver, its own church and school with fifty scholars, and two football teams.

The people were immensely strong. The men would carry a boll of meal ($1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.) ten miles over the hill-road. A woman on one occasion carried $2\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. of meal several hundred yards from the pier to her house, and one night she carried a dead man over the hill to the ferry.

The ground was never turned without adding manure, either dung or seaweed or shell sand. The loch, it is told, would be a picture with all the boats returning from the Summer Isles with seaweed. And yet, intensive as the cultivations were, they were insufficient to maintain everyone. In the immediate neighbourhood there was a limited amount of seasonal work, such as ghillying and estate work, and these jobs were eagerly sought for. A number of families began to send individuals further afield, to domestic service, to the yachts and merchant service. Some went to the towns. Others emigrated. As the cheap food era rose to its zenith the labour involved in maintaining a home-grown diet appeared unnecessarily irksome. Such energy could be more profitably harnessed elsewhere. Without a factory chimney anywhere in sight, the life-blood of the place was absorbed by the industrial machine. Crofts were given up. Winter storms harried the roofs from the houses. The stones fell.

IT is interesting to observe that where the challenge was too severe the establishment of a community failed to endure. Scorraig itself faces south and enjoys many sunny summers. It is not hopelessly inaccessible and is a port of call for the Glasgow steamer. The north side of the peninsula was colonised too. Here the conditions proved too severe. Despite all the disadvantages, a determined minority clung to their ground at Scorraig, but the gallant attempt to establish settlements on the other side of the hill succumbed eventually to the forbidding vistas of snow-covered northern mountains and the utter isolation. To-day the townships of Achmore, Annat, and Badacrain are only heaps of stones.

For years Scorraig hovered on the borderline. Always there was the question whether it would be practicable to remain. Only one link required to break—the withdrawal of the steamer service, the quitting of the only holding where the bull could be kept—and a mass exodus would be inevitable. Gradually the numbers dwindled. By the end of the First World War the population was below thirty in number, and was getting too small to be comfortable. The sister township of Rhireavach, with its four inhabitants, was only a ghost.

As the numbers fell the tasks of the remainder increased. Sustained efforts and unrelaxing vigilance were called for if the isolated pocket of a lost battlefield were to be held, and still there might always be the cruel flick of fortune which could dash all one's lobster-crrels against the rocks and sink one's boat at its moorings by a sudden change of wind. By the eve of the Second World War it looked as though the place was finished.

But the great convulsion brought a reprieve. Overnight the Highland croft passed from a picturesque anachronism to an important agricultural unit. The guaranteed market arrived at last. Sheep-ranging—the last card—yielded to mixed farming, with hill cows subsidised at £7 per head per annum, and poultry-keeping transformed from a pin-money affair to a major source of income.

To-day, though its numbers are depleted, the township could be said to be in a comparatively strong position, with commitments fully taken up. What the future has in store cannot be conjectured, because there are too many unknown factors. This outlying community can control its own immediate problems, but its blood-stream derives from the larger Western civilisation of which it is only a tiny cell.

Wooler

*In Wooler all the roads go round
Returning to enchantment still,
To city of our childhood's ground,
Where magic hid on every hill.*

*In Wooler where we used to play,
With shining flowers beside the stream,
The road goes round to yesterday,
But we have lost the ancient dream.*

*The soul that was our soul remembers
The fairy valley that we saw.
We have gone on to grave Novembers,
We are bound under winter's law.*

*What will we wish, then, wishing-well?
The years can bring us nothing good
Unless we feel again the spell
Of Wooler town and Wooler wood.*

J. L.



Bottle Message

Captain J. G. SOULSBY

IN the year 1912 I was in command of the s.s. *Amicus* when on the 5th of August she sailed from Buenos Aires for Amsterdam with a cargo of 6000 tons of maize. Since leaving England two months previously the voyage had passed very happily, my wife being on board and also a young student who was making the round voyage to gain experience on shipping matters before taking up the business of steamship management ashore.

After leaving Buenos Aires we experienced favourable weather during the greater part of the passage, with the exception of four or five days—after crossing the Equator—when steaming against strong north-east trade-winds, and later when passing Cape Finisterre and entering the Bay of Biscay.

At noon on the 2nd of September, four weeks after sailing from Buenos Aires, the Amsterdam pilot was taken on board off Dungeness, and it was at this stage of our homeward passage that our good luck was halted and our troubles began.

At the time the pilot came on board the wind was freshening from the north and the barometer falling rapidly. We were in for some very bad weather, and well we knew what to expect when we had cleared the lee of

the South Foreland. The outlook, however, did not in any way whatever perturb our two passengers, as both of them were in high spirits at the prospect of arriving at Amsterdam on the morrow. It was at 7 p.m.—seven hours after leaving Dungeness—that the unexpected happened. The chains connected with the steam steering-gear carried away, owing to a large iron sheave having broken in half.

We were now feeling the full force of the gale, with very heavy seas breaking on board. I was on the bridge at the time the mishap occurred, and knew at once that the broken sheave could not be repaired, which meant that the vessel would have to reach Ymuiden under the hand gear. With the engines stopped, causing the vessel to fall off into the trough of the sea, the decks were flooded fore and aft by the seas sweeping across the vessel and the fixing up of the hand steering-gear was a heart-breaking job, but the connecting up of the two large teakwood wheels on the poop, acting directly with the rudder, was eventually accomplished.

Owing to the gale and the heavy seas, two seamen had to be stationed at each wheel, but despite this arrangement the four helmsmen had a most difficult and arduous task to keep

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the vessel on her proper course and to prevent her gripping to windward. As it was now a matter of all hands on deck, I arranged for each man at the wheel to be relieved every two hours, with one officer in attendance to supervise the steering.

To make matters worse, at midnight we came across a fleet of Dutch fishing craft hove-to weathering out the gale, their bright lights blinking across the full stretch of the horizon directly ahead, which to anyone unaccustomed to such a sight would have suggested that we were steaming towards the promenade of a seaside resort.

Because of the howling of the gale, and the noise made by the crashing of the seas breaking on board, it was impossible to give a verbal order from the bridge to the second officer on the poop supervising the four helmsmen, the distance between the poop and the bridge, where the pilot and myself were in charge, being about seventy-five yards. I should mention that the pilot need not have been on the bridge, as we had not reached the point where he took charge under the ruling of an Amsterdam pilot. Still, knowing the difficulty presented by our having to pass through the fishing fleet spread across the distant horizon, the pilot voluntarily rendered his services on the bridge.

I now decided to leave the bridge in charge of the pilot, and walked aft towards the poop as I wished to inform the second officer that we were approaching a widely-scattered fleet of fishing craft and that he must be very careful to watch the signals for the manipulation of the ship's helm. A bright light shown from the port side of the bridge was to be 'Port the helm'; a bright light shown from the starboard side of the bridge, 'Starboard your helm'; and a bright light shown from amidships abaft the funnel, 'Steady as you go.'

As I made my way to the poop, a very heavy sea swept over the port side and filled the after main-deck with water level with the bulwarks. As it crashed aboard, however, I managed to spring into the inside of the lee main rigging and scramble up about fifteen feet, the only discomfort being that I was thoroughly drenched with a portion of the North Sea, even at that height from the deck. When the main-deck was clear of water, I left the rigging and managed to make the poop, where I gave the second officer particular

instructions to be very careful in watching the signals from the bridge, and to repeat them by flashing a light from the same side of the poop as an indication that the signals had been correctly taken.

On my way back to the bridge I instructed the third officer, who was stationed abaft the funnel, to watch for my flash-signal from amidships on the bridge and to repeat the signal to the second officer on the poop. This method had to be adapted because the midship signal could not have been seen by the officer on the poop owing to the ship's funnel being in his line of vision. As it turned out, my hurriedly-arranged system of signalling was very satisfactory, considering it was the first time I had had to devise such a code of steering by signal.

After an hour of strenuous and anxious work for all concerned we got clear of the fishing fleet, although on two occasions we had to ring the engines 'Slow' to prevent what looked like being a collision with one of the craft, and it was with a great sense of relief that I saw the last of the fleet lying dead astern.

After 8 a.m. the gale moderated slightly, although there was still a very heavy sea running. However, with the help of 'the sweet little cherub that sits up aloft to look o'er poor Jack at sea,' we arrived safely off Ymuiden breakwater at 1 p.m. on 3rd September, twenty-five hours after leaving Dungeness. Had the breaking of the steering-chains and sheave never occurred, we would have covered the distance in sixteen hours.

Upon the arrival of the vessel off the breakwater, I was surprised to see three tugs awaiting to offer towage service, but what I was told when I reached the office later in the day made it obvious why the tugs were outside the breakwater ready to offer assistance. Still, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, for, the tugs being already on the scene, I did not need to signal for assistance, thereby saving time. With the tugs assisting, the vessel was skilfully steered, despite the heavy sea running, between the two breakwaters, and safely anchored in smooth water inside, and near the entrance of the canal leading up to Amsterdam, twelve miles further on.

At 5 p.m., an hour after arriving at Amsterdam, I went ashore and proceeded to the agents' office to report the arrival of the

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vessel, my student passenger accompanying me. My wife had decided not to go ashore until the following day. On my entering the office, the manager shook hands with me and said: 'Captain, we are very glad to greet you, and congratulate you upon your safe arrival as we have been very anxious after receiving your bottle message.' I was greatly astonished at the bit about the bottle message. 'I know nothing whatever about a bottle message,' I said.

Before the manager could say anything more, my student passenger, looking very confused, spoke up and said: 'Captain, I must explain matters. At midnight last night, five hours after the accident happened to the steering-gear, I was seated in the galley, having volunteered to make coffee to serve to the helmsmen. After doing this, I saw an empty fruit-bottle on one of the galley shelves and the thought occurred to me to despatch a bottle message, only as an experiment, to see how long it would eventually drift around the ocean, fully expecting it would be several weeks, perhaps months, before it was picked up. The message was: "This bottle was thrown into the North Sea from the s.s. *Amicus* at midnight 3rd September 1912. Steam steering-gear broken."

Cannot be repaired, but vessel is proceeding —all well—under hand steering-gear towards Ymuiden breakwater." Having securely corked the bottle, sealing it well with sealing-wax, I then threw it overboard, unknown to anyone.'

On hearing this, the manager, knowing that the bottle had been washed ashore at 7 a.m., said to me that it was obvious that the bottle was picked up only seven hours after being thrown into the sea, and the position of the steamer at the time the bottle was despatched would be about twenty-two miles from the nearest Dutch coast.

The fisherman who found the bottle on the beach had gone to the nearest post-office, and the official in charge having been able to read English had telephoned to the shipping-agents at Amsterdam the message contained in the bottle, with the result that the agents received the news of the breaking of the steam steering-gear on board the *Amicus* six hours before the vessel arrived.

Although it is nearly forty years since the incident occurred, the various circumstances connected with it come vividly before me, and I count the whole happening as one of my most memorable experiences in a long life at sea, first in sail and later in steam.

Colour Language

MAURICE BENSLEY

AFTER years of striving to reduce the complex diversity of colours to terms of reasonably easy reference, experts have at last delivered themselves of a colour dictionary. It puts within daily reach the hitherto dimly-understood language of colours, as a lexicon standardises English and as the New Testament codifies Christianity. It will be an advantage to be able to speak it.

The new authority is the British Colour

Council's *Dictionary of Colours for Interior Decoration*. It is interesting, if not necessary, to know that Cambridge Blue was adopted from Eton Blue in 1863, when the Cambridge University crew included eight Etonians; that other colours, like Wedgwood Blue and Rose Pompadour, are based on famous periods of decoration. But the Dictionary's important function is to standardise colours, so that we may know the official names for the shades or

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patterns we want in paints, carpets, curtains, chair-covers, clothes. Attempts at verbal description are usually vague, therefore confusing. How much better when, for example, blues are regularised as to Navy, Cadet, Flight, Air, Storm, Moon, Cascade, Princess, Wedgwood.

It might seem that colour-blindness would complicate matters, but it does so only slightly. Thirty to forty men in a thousand are in varying degree blind to colour distinction, while only one to four of the same number of women are so affected. The precise figures are open to disagreement, but there is no difference of view on the very much slighter feminine disability. And as colour selection depends in the main upon women the complication is relatively unimportant.

IT is other factors which have made the compiling of the Dictionary far from easy. Although there are only seven grades in the solar spectrum, or rainbow, there are nearly a million combinations possible from these seven basics and their secondaries and tertiaries. Fortunately, however, the human eye recognises only a very small number of the variations. Thus the range can be reduced to a manageable few. The Dictionary fixes them at 378.

By means of these standard colours the Dictionary aims at assisting the application and co-ordination of colour in the home; at showing how the comfort and appeal of a home can be enhanced by colour-harmony; and at illustrating how taste in selection is more important than a large income, since only the individual can discriminate in the blending of colours, textures, and shapes to form an attractive pattern. Few people can start furnishing with a large cheque alone; building up a home is a continuous process.

Research which preceded this standardisation paid special attention to lighting also. Varying lights make the same colour appear different. Deficient in violet and blue, filament lamps are stronger in red and orange; they thus enrich warm hues, but debase cold ones. To a great extent fluorescent lighting corrects this. But, mindful of the probability of still further home-lighting developments, care has been taken to enable selectors to achieve harmony under any and all lighting conditions.

Put briefly, the Dictionary has three primary,

and a number of secondary, aims. The three primary aims are co-ordination of colour design in the movable features of a house—furnishings, pottery, glassware, kitchenware; development of colour and design for children, in the shape of special charts and themes; and matters of seasonal colours in women's dress. However, application in other fields is also based on the Council's findings.

That colour reflects human feelings and temperament is obvious from everyday speech. We note black looks, see red, feel off colour or blue; so and so is a white man, or has a yellow streak, or is a colourful personality. Thus it came to be realised that colour, which so strongly mirrors the human make-up, could also be made to influence it. Both exterior and interior treatments on new municipal housing-estates are, therefore, now designed to give a fillip to happy and rational living, though the final choice of colour-schemes for individual dwellings rests with the householders themselves. Planned colour-codes are drawn upon for the interiors of day-nurseries, schools, hospitals, and restaurants. Even new office equipment is slowly falling into line. And the general effects of the brighter colour-schemes in cotton-mills and wool-mills have been pronounced 'unbelievably successful.'

All this seems to be due, if not always directly, to the Council's investigations as to how the magician Colour can be used to improve temper, efficiency, and production. Sometimes inquiries reach this body from unexpected quarters on unexpected matters. One from Persia was prompted by a wish to colour-combat Communist propaganda.

THE science of colours is being increasingly and interestingly linked to humane considerations, the dangerous moving-parts of factory and mining-pit machinery being painted in quickly distinguishable shades. During the present campaign to brighten up the mines, pit ponies, which are still used in a Leicestershire colliery, were moved into newly - equipped, brightly - lit underground stables with spotless whitewashed walls. They refused to eat. Only when the walls were repainted green did the animals recover their appetites.

Had these ponies had the gift of speech, they might have offered the simple explanation that what they like best in life is grass—and

BUYING A KITTEN

grass is green. Miners themselves are in the happier position of being able to apply the principle to their own quarters in the manner they choose. Wishing to renovate their mine in their own way, men of Crigglesworth Colliery, Yorkshire, brushed off the dull black and Admiralty grey of the pit machinery and substituted cream and green, picked out in red oxide. Working during off-hours, they finished the whole job in six months.

There are moves for more colour in church decoration, on and in public vehicles and civic buildings, for distinguishing but pleasing road-surface colourings, and for a better use of the permissive shades in outdoor advertising.

The Council has made the interesting discovery that colour preferences vary with people's ages and stations. For instance, vivid primaries in writing-papers appeal more strongly to the simple-minded. A small child usually chooses red or bright pink. The mind is trained as education advances, and

an aesthetic sense develops. While young folk prefer deeper blues and the fancy shades, older people favour azure tints or whites. Taste, then, inclines increasingly towards the more subtle varieties of colour-shades and tints. Manufacturers of machines used in the home are realising that the smaller the instrument the lighter should be its colour. Sewing-machines can be painted in much lighter colours than forging-presses.

Responsibilities of the scientists of interior decoration in particular have, indeed, grown suddenly vastly important. Immediate surroundings must have a marked effect on the temper and reactions of men and women gathered in the council-chambers of the world. A tense debate taking place within four walls painted in deep green and overlaid with vermillion stripes might inevitably break up in disorder. Friendly discussion and cool, objective reasoning would be much more probable between walls of a gentle blue discreetly dashed with silver.

Buying a Kitten

ALEX DILKE

IN Britain there are at least twice as many cats as dogs, and it is estimated that a cat has a place in seven homes out of ten. Yet the great majority of people take far less trouble in choosing a cat than in choosing a dog, and in all too many households a kitten is installed by chance or accident rather than as a result of choice after careful thought.

The first question that should be considered is whether you should have a cat at all. Most people give some thought to acquiring a dog, realising that this addition to the household will mean buying a dog licence and undertaking new responsibilities in providing exercise and food. But a cat has such a capacity for self-sufficiency if necessary that a kitten

is often got just because it looks pretty, or because the children want it to play with, or because it is hoped it will keep down the mice.

Cats being individualists can survive and even be happy in conditions which would make a dog miserable. The introduction of any animal into the home, however, involves responsibility, and therefore, before deciding that you just must have that fascinating, playful kitten, you should remember that it has before it a life of at least ten years and ask yourself certain questions. Are you prepared for the expense of feeding it properly? A cat, no more than a dog, cannot be healthily fed simply on scraps. Do you realise that it will need companionship as well as merely food

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and warmth? Can you make arrangements for it to be cared for if you have to spend a week-end away or during your holidays?

The need for a much greater sense of responsibility in acquiring a cat is shown by the pitiful number of strays collected in our big cities every year and by the thousands taken to vets to be put away for no better reason than that their owners who fell in love with taking kittens now find the grown cat interferes with their social life.

If you have weighed these questions and decided that any small trouble you have to take will be more than adequately repaid by the companionship of a cat, you must then consider how to acquire a cat and what kind of cat. Many choices arise. What sex shall the cat be? Nine out of ten people will prefer a male, because they are not prepared to deal with endless litters of kittens. Their choice is wise, although they deny themselves the fascination of watching kittens grow up. I think some of us should now find our homes dull without the periodical arrival of new lives which we watch grow from feeble scraps to complete little cats in less than three months.

This is a matter for every person to settle for himself, but I would say this: Do not get a female unless you are really prepared to take trouble with the kittens, to welcome them rather than regard them as a nuisance. If you do get a female, there are many advantages in buying a pure-bred cat and mating her properly, for then you will be able to recoup the expenses involved or at least find it easy to get good homes for the kittens. By keeping the female, or queen as breeders call her, indoors when she is in season and you do not want her to mate, you can restrict the number of litters to the benefit of her health.

The operation of neutering female cats, or spaying, is now carried out with comparative safety by vets who specialise in the work. The neutered female does not, like the neutered male, tend to go to fat, or, in my experience, undergo the change in character that follows neutering of the male. There is much to be said for a neutered female, although I must admit that personally, knowing the wonderful gift the cat has for motherhood, I find a spayed queen a little incomplete.

Most people will rightly insist on a male, and, unless he is to be deliberately used as a stud, he should, I think, be neutered. The

majority of full males make the house unpleasant by spraying, are apt to prove a nuisance to neighbours at nights, incline to wander off for days, and, perhaps most important, nearly always end up with wounds from fighting. These wounds tend to go septic.

THE next question is whether the kitten shall be pure-bred or cross-bred. The vast majority of cats in Britain are, of course, cross-bred, the result of indiscriminate breeding for many generations, but in the last ten years there has been a much greater interest in pure-bred cats, not simply for showing, but also as pets. The advantages of the pure-bred cats are their great beauty and, at any rate in the case of some breeds, their great intelligence. This question of intelligence is perhaps a dangerous one on which to generalise, but undoubtedly some breeds, like the Siamese and Abyssinian, have more than average intelligence and companionability. On the other hand, I believe that just any ordinary cross-bred would probably prove more than ordinarily intelligent if it were given the same attention as a pure-bred. Owners of pure-bred cats, having paid anything from two to twenty guineas, naturally give their pets considerable attention and company, and an understanding and friendship grows between cat and human being which is quite unknown to the people who regard 'the cat' as a piece of furniture or something simply to be put out or called in.

The kittens resulting from the miskating of a pure-bred, especially a Siamese, are often of great character and exceptional robustness because of their 'hybrid vigour.' Half-bred Siamese will bear no resemblance in markings to their pure-bred parent, but they often have some of their athletic ability and other characteristics.

My advice would be to have a pure-bred if you can afford it, and the steadily increasing number of people buying pure-bred cats suggests that we may find the same change coming as with dogs. During the last twenty years the proportion of thoroughbred dogs has increased very greatly, so that, in towns at least, you see almost as many spaniels, poodles, and the rest as mongrels.

THERE are about twenty-eight different varieties of cat to choose from and I

BUYING A KITTEN

cannot attempt here even a summary of the points and characteristics of each. If you are thinking of buying a pure-bred cat and have an open mind on the variety, visit one of the large cat-shows and you will see specimens of most of the varieties. Broadly, these varieties are divided into long-haired and short-haired. The long-haired are of outstanding beauty, an ornament on any sofa or hearthrug. Owners will dispute the point, but I doubt whether there is much to choose in intelligence and companionability between the long-hairs and short-hairs. The disadvantage of the long-hairs is that, if they are to be kept in good condition, they require regular grooming. An uncared-for long-hair is a sorry sight. But, with the single exception of the Siamese, long-haired varieties are generally more popular than short-haired.

The short-haired cats include three varieties of tabby, namely, the British and Russian (Foreign) Blues, the Manx, and the Abyssinian and Siamese, in three recognised colours—seal, blue, and chocolate-pointed. The Siamese has become so well known in the last twenty years that it needs no recommendation, but I would advise you not to buy this variety unless you are prepared to give it companionship which it needs, perhaps, more than other kinds of cats, and certainly do not buy a female unless you, and your neighbours, are prepared for periodical outbursts of calling quite as loud as that of a human baby! The Abyssinian is a neglected breed which has many of the characteristics of the Siamese without the disadvantage, to some people, of the voice, but the Abyssinian also requires companionship and, more than most cats, a garden in which to exercise. It is probably the most demonstratively affectionate of all breeds. The Manx is another extremely attractive and companionable variety.

It would be possible, however, to argue the merits of this or that variety endlessly. In my experience the character of cats differs enormously, even within the same variety, and reflects the character and outlook of their owners. From this point of view I would prefer a kitten from a home where it has been well loved and cared for.

GOOD health is essential. The kitten that is a 'poor doer' rarely grows into a healthy and long-lived cat, and certainly should not be allowed to breed. When you are con-

sidering a kitten do not allow your natural enchantment with its taking ways to blind you to signs of poor health. A healthy kitten is alert and lively. Its eyes should be bright and there should be no signs of running from them. A pot-belly is a symptom of under-nourishment or worms. Look at the kitten's tail-end. If it is over-pink and swollen, it probably has diarrhoea. Look inside the ears for dirt. Incidentally, make sure you check the sex yourself and don't accept the word of the dealer or giver. I have known a surprising number of people acquire 'male' kittens which started them by producing kittens a few months later!

Many people say they want 'just a good mouser,' and there is an unfortunate popular myth that a wild, unsociable, and ill-fed cat makes a better mouser than a petted one. This leads to unintended cruelty, since the cat is not fed, in the belief this will make it a hunter. So it will, but it will probably hunt birds and animals, including chickens and young rabbits, rather than mice and inedible rats. A well-fed cat makes the best mouser, because cats hunt mice for sport and not for food. Reading Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography recently, I was interested to find this was recognised four hundred years ago. Cellini says: 'Cats of good breed hunt better fat than lean and honest men use their talents to better purpose when they have enough to live on.'

There is no infallible test for a mouser, although formerly at Continental shows the class for mousters was judged on the opening of the jaws (up to four inches) and the size of the paws. Mousing, however, runs in families, because if the mother is a keen mouser she will instruct her kittens when they are about eight weeks old and deliberately arouse their hunting instinct. These lessons are fascinating to watch. The fancy breeds are sometimes kept under conditions where they have no chance to use their hunting instinct, but under the same conditions the pure-bred is just as efficient at mousing as the half-wild cat. Where the cat is a pet it is likely to bring the corpses to its owner as trophies, and this, at least, has the advantage that you know the mice and rats are being caught. Many people consider the female mostly the better hunter.

PERSONALLY, I prefer to buy a kitten direct from the breeder and not from a

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shop, where there is a chance it will pick up infection even during a brief stay. Moreover, if you have in mind breeding yourself or showing, it is unlikely that you will get a first-class cat through a dealer. Breeders can dispose of their best privately, and if you are going to breed and show you should start with the best you can find. You would probably find a kitten through one of the specialist cat-breed societies and you should, as a novice, certainly try to get the assistance of someone with experience in choosing a kitten.

I think eight weeks is the minimum age at which a kitten should be taken from its family, and I would prefer ten weeks in the case of pure-bred cats. The kitten taken too early may give much trouble in feeding and is likely to pine for its companions. Ask the owner for details about the way in which it has been fed and the sanitary arrangements it is accustomed to. A kitten at eight weeks is house-trained by its mother, but if you do not

provide the facilities it is used to it may become dirty, which will make it, as well as you, unhappy. Adaptation to whatever you find convenient can come gradually.

If you have never read a good book on looking after cats try one of the number available. Far too many people working on hearsay have the strangest notions about feeding cats. There is the idea, for instance, that milk is their basic food. In fact, many breeders never give them milk at all—cats are perfectly happy with water, and milk is too weak as a food. Read also some of the excellent books written by cat-lovers—Michael Joseph's *Cats' Company*, Pamela and James Mason's *The Cats in Our Lives*, to mention only two. They may give you quite new ideas about what cats have to offer those who know how to live with them and open up a world of companionship and never-ending interest of which you had never dreamed, for the cat takes a very great deal more understanding than the dog.

Deltit Feel

(*'Petted Silly'*)

HORACE : *Odes*, I, viii

*Bell, by a' the poors abeen,
Fat is this ye've gaen an' deen?
Jock ye've witched an' deltit feel,
Made a littlin o' the chiel.*

*Noo he shuns the fields o' play.
Fit tae stan' the heat o' day,
Can't he ride amang his marrows,
Practise castin' spear an' arrows?*

*Shuns he Spey's cauld waves like pushon
Though he's grace, an' wit, an' fushon,
He wha aince the quoit could yark,
As weel as spear, far by the mark.*

*O' this I'm sure—he canna noo
Show limbs by sports made black an' blue.
Foo shuns he the licht o' day
An's nae mair seen at work or play?*

*Gie him a goon an' lat him weer't,
Tho' still I canna think he's feert.
Set free the lad—it's a' your wyte.
He's fankled in your apron's bight,
Like Thetis' son, the chiel was ca'd.
Senseless love can only blaud.*

ELLA GILBERT.



Possessions

GEORGE EWART EVANS

A MONTH after my father died they sold up the shop to pay the debts. Our big family and the pit-strike had knocked the stuffing out of the grocery business and after my father's death it passed out without a whimper. The only bit of stock left after the sell-up was the pony and his cart. My mother had held on to the pony by swearing it was hers—down on the books in her name; but even then, if she hadn't been pretty downright with the auctioneer, a big chap with a smooth skin and an expensive, whisky complexion, they'd have put the pony under the hammer as well. They left the cart because it wasn't worth taking away. Ma also clung on to the old piano with the pleated silk front. The auctioneer had walked round it, mumbling that it would fetch a pound or two and ought by rights to be sold up with the other things, but Ma had stood her ground over this too.

Dick, the pony, had been with us for nearly twenty years, and none of us wanted to part with him. He was like one of the family. He was something more than an ordinary pony, too: he had some real blood in him. My uncle bred Welsh cobs and Dick had come from his stable. When he was younger, he pulled the grocer's cart as though he were doing us all a big favour. But he had no

belly then for this kind of life: there were too many stops in it for his liking, and he waited for the time when he had the light pleasure-trap behind him or our Tom on his back. Then you'd see him prance and tear the road up as you'd expect from a pony whose uncles and cousins had fought in two wars. He stood about thirteen hands, and he could do most things bar talk; and, if tossing his head was anything to go by, he'd make a good try at that.

But there was a bit of a difference just before the big sell-up, when Ma said she was determined to keep the pony. Tom, my eldest brother, tried to reason with her. 'But what are you going to do with the pony, Ma?' he asked.

'What should I be doing with him? Let him rest, of course. He's done his work. Besides, you'll all be growing up before long and going off and getting married and leaving the house. I'd like to have the old pony for a bit of company.'

'Talk sense, Ma,' Tom said. 'Who's talking of leaving you?'

'Well, I'm keeping the pony,' Ma said doggedly, 'and the piano as well. Gomer's got talent and we can make do with that old piano for a good while yet.'

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A SHORT while after the sale, Tom had another try to make Ma see reason. The pony was in the stall, just doing nothing except to take Gomer and me for a joy-ride in the rickety old cart occasionally.

'We'll have to sell Dick,' Tom said one day after he came home from his new job at the pit. 'We can't afford to keep him, Ma. We're short of money.'

My mother went on with her darning, her spectacles halfway down her nose.

Then our Gomer spoke. 'Dando Hamer the Ragman has been asking about Dick,' he said. 'His donkey is failing.' But straightway he wished that he'd not opened his mouth, because he wanted to keep the pony as much as I did.

'Dando Hamer is it?' Ma said, sitting up. 'There's a fine one to get the pony! He'd either work him to death or else freeze him, keeping him standing outside the Greyhound while he gets drunk. And, when he'd slaved him until he was a bag of bones, he'd pack him off to the knacker's yard.'

'Look, Ma,' Tom said persuasively, 'why not have a word with Dando Hamer? I'll ask him to call up, and if he offers a fair price, let him have the pony. Better to sell him to Hamer, where we can keep an eye on him, than for him to go, goodness knows where, and get the skin tanned off his backside.' Then he added quietly: 'Don't forget all the oats we'll be [having] to buy. He's just about through[the] bin we had left out of the stock.'

My mother could see the sense of Tom's argument, but she pondered for a long time before answering. Then she laid down her darning. 'All right, you know best, Tom,' she said without looking up. 'We'd better see this Dando and have a talk with him. I'll send Gomer or Willy down to ask him to call. I tell you this, though, the family won't be the same without the pony: it will be like losing one of the children.' Then, as a stubborn afterthought: 'But, say what you like, I'm going to keep that piano. I saved it from the sell-up, and I'm going to keep it even if it's the last stick of furniture we've got in the house!'

THE next morning I walked down to call on Dando the Ragman, taking the first step towards selling the pony. I felt that I was drawing down heavy shutters on the past.

There had never been a time when I couldn't remember hearing the strangely comforting clatter of the pony's hoof on the cobbles in the stable; and the way he gave you a prod with his nose or a playful nip on the arm with his teeth when he wanted something you were a bit slow in getting. Nor could I forget the time when I was very young and the business was roaring ahead like a heath-fire, and Dick the pony was lifting up his knees enough to make a champion trotter look to his rosettes and his ribbons. At that time, when we had made our last call, usually in the topmost house of the village halfway up the steep hill-side, Tom would sit back on an upturned sugar-box with the reins loose in his hands, and he'd say, 'Home, Dick,' and the pony would go as fast as a baby for his first birthday, his neck arched, his legs working like pistons, and the cart like a flying chariot behind him. I was very sad, and both my feet were on my mother's side in this business of selling the pony. But I could see that all the sense was with Tom.

Dando the Ragman lived by himself at the bottom end of the village in an old stone cottage by the river. When he opened the door to my knock I saw him without his cap for the first time, and I noticed his hair was all matted and tangled like the inside of an old mattress. His eyes were as red as two plums.

'My mother wants you to call to see the pony,' I said.

Dando's lips moved silently before he spoke. A few of the boys were saying that Dando had given some of his wits away with the balloons and paper windmills that he traded in exchange for rags. But he seemed to have a grip on all of his wits this morning. 'Selling him, she is?' His eyes narrowed as he thrust his bristle-covered face towards me.

'I don't know,' I answered cautiously, mistrusting the cunning bloodshot eyes.

He grinned as he thrust a two-inch nail through the top of his trousers to secure one tag of his braces. 'That will be all right, boy. Tell her I'll call this morning.' And as I walked back towards the village he roared after me in his raucous street-cry: 'And if you've got any old rags or jam-jars, false teeth or ironwork, turn 'em out, turn 'em out! Dando'll be there! Dando'll be there!' I hurried off up the road, glad to be away from this apparition who was likely soon to be Dick's new owner.

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DANDO came up to our house later that morning, just after Gomer and I had got home from school. Gomer was practising on the piano, and Dando stood at the back-door looking through to the parlour at him and listening, as though he were in a trance, to the old notes chiming. Ma paused by the table and watched Dando for a moment. Then she clicked her tongue and whispered: 'Drunk already, at this time of the morning!' Gomer's left hand stuttered a bit, and he came to a stop. The spell was broken, and Dando collected himself and nodded at Ma, whom he had now noticed for the first time. Ma told him about the pony.

'But I'm not wanting a pony, Mrs Pritchard,' he said, looking sheepishly at her from under his peaked cap. Dando was a bit afraid of Ma's dark eyes and her sharp tongue.

'Well, there's not much use you and me talking by here, is there?' Ma said briskly, taking off her apron. Dando leaned against the jamb of the door and scratched the back of his neck. He watched her fold her apron and place it neatly on the dresser. He was still silent after she had smoothed down her skirt in a last gesture. She repeated: 'If you don't want the pony, there's no use our wasting breath, is there, now?'

Dando seemed to ponder this. Then he stood up off the door-jamb and scratched his shoulder. He spoke quietly, cautiously like a pleading child, uncertain of the effect of his words: 'Any rags, Mrs Pritchard, jars, old ironwork, false . . .'

'No!'

He took off his cap, examined the inside of it carefully, and clapped it back on to his head. 'How old would your pony be, now, Mrs Pritchard?' he asked casually, as though it was a question he had just read in the dirty lining of his cap.

'Nineteen,' Ma answered boldly, waving Gomer and me back to give Dando air to make up his mind.

'A bit old for a horse,' he answered, with a wary, tentative leer at Ma.

'Nonsense!' Ma said. 'Old? Be off with you! This pony's father fought in the wars and lived until he was thirty-one. He used to carry a thirteen-stone drunken farmer over the mountain to Pentre until a few years before he died. If you think he's old,' she took up the folded apron and held it under Dando's nose, 'you try stopping him once he's got his head pointed towards home.'

'Can I see the pony, Mrs Pritchard?' Dando asked, very subdued.

'Certainly, if you're thinking of buying him. Otherwise, it will be waste of time.' She pretended to hesitate, then said: 'Besides, I've not decided for sure that I'm going to sell him.'

But Ma showed him the pony, and Dando was made to feel that he was looking at a prince among horses, a possession without price; and indeed he was, but only to my mother. They manœuvred and haggled for half-an-hour, until at last Dando offered a pound less than the eight Ma had asked for him. Ma accepted the offer and the skirmishing was over.

Afterwards, Tom said that it was a good price, better than we should have got elsewhere.

Ma answered: 'Fair price or no, I wouldn't let him take the pony from the stable until he'd sworn, with his five fingers to the sky, that he'd treat him kindly and never let the knackers get hold of him while he was still living.'

After the pony had gone, the empty stall was like a big draughty hole in the side of the house. Dando Hamer had sold his donkey and Dick was now in the shafts of the rag-and-bone cart, though none of us had seen him yet. Whenever we heard Dando's war-cry bellowing up the street Gomer and I slunk into the house, not wishing to see Dick heading Dando's sordid turnout.

But we still had the piano; and Ma polished it so often that it shone better than a pulpit, and our Gomer as he sat by it could see the top of the garden and the post for the clothes-line reflected in it. Badgered by Ma, Gomer practised night and morning; and at no time was the house free, or so it seemed, from the tinkling chimes of 'The Bells of Aberdovey.'

WITHIN a few weeks, in the press of the new arrangements after the sell-up, the pony slipped out of mind. Only my mother still had him very much in mind all the time. As soon as she heard the ragman's raucous voice in the street she'd be out on the doorstep to see how the pony was shaping. One day she walked across to him with an apple. Dick knew her as soon as she approached, and he lifted his head and showed a little of his old spirit. Mother was surprised, as we were, when she saw Dick close up—not that there

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was anything wrong with him, not anything you could put a finger on. Although he was a good deal thinner, he was still in pretty good condition. Yet he seemed to have shrunk into himself; his head had lost its angle and his neck its arch. He reminded you of an old man who had reached the breathing-through-the-mouth stage. My mother's eyes darkened as she drew her hands through the pony's mane. Often when she was moved by some emotion it turned suddenly to anger; and now she looked at Dando and sharpened her tongue. 'You want to use the brush and the currycomb on the pony a bit more than you're doing.' Harmless words, but said in a voice and with a look that accused Dando of a crime no less than the starving of his own child would have been. His bloodshot eyes looked obliquely from under the peak of his cap, but that morning he didn't have the spirit in him to say that the pony was no longer hers.

A short while after this a sore developed on one of the pony's legs. Ma spotted it and told Dando that she would report him unless he got the leg attended to. The sore got better, but it was plain that the pony was being neglected. Dando spent all his time in the pubs. He'd start out early on his round, full of good intentions as a new minister; and then he'd stop at the Greyhound and get himself anchored there for the rest of the day with the old pony drooping his head outside. Tom used to see him there often as he came home from work in the afternoon; but he told Ma nothing.

One evening, however, we could see that something was wrong. It had been a pouring wet day, with a cold wind blowing the weather up the valley. Tom's face was black even after he'd washed all the coal off it. As he was having his meal, he broke a piece of bread savagely and nodded his head over his shoulder as he blurted out: 'That pony's outside the Greyhound in this rain. Looks as if he's been there all day!'

Ma returned the teapot to the hob and looked at Tom. She took her apron off and folded it neatly on the dresser. Something was going to happen! 'Go outside to the stable, Gomer,' she ordered. 'There's still a lot of bracken in the loft. Strew it deep in Dick's stall.'

'What are you going to do, Ma?' Tom asked.

'We're going to have him back.'

'But you can't!'

'Can't we?' she said, looking round for her coat. 'We'll see. I'll go for him myself if no one else will.'

'But you can't, Ma! It would be stealing to fetch him back here.'

'Who's talking about stealing? He's outside the Greyhound is he?'

'Ay, tied to the fence at the side.'

'Well, you've only got to loosen him!' Ma said, her dark eyes dancing with anger, 'and I know which home he'll make for!'

It was as simple as that, and none of us had thought about it! Tom got up from the table and reached for his cap.

Ma said: 'No, let one of the boys go, Tom. It won't look so . . . downright,' she added cunningly. 'You go, Willy,' she said, turning to me. 'It's still raining hard, so the streets will be empty. Just untie him and stand back. Here, take this sugar with you.'

I was outside on the pavement in no time, with a pocketful of lump-sugar and my face red with excitement. It was raining sheets of glass and the pony was almost frozen when I got down to him. His head was as low as the ground. The road was a stream and the street was deserted. As I gave him the sugar, I spoke his name. He nudged me in his old way, and tried to get his nose into my pocket. 'Now he's alive,' I thought, 'and now he'll go.' I slipped the orange-box rope off his bit. The street was still empty as he turned his head round to the road. Then I said: 'Home, Dick!'

The old pony turned his head and looked at me inquiringly. I repeated the words. His ears went up suddenly—and within a few seconds the wheels of the rag-cart were turning faster than the wheels of a pit-cage. And all the rags and cans Dando had collected before he'd gone to earth were strewing themselves about the swimming roadway. Up the street went the pony, the cart flying behind him and fanning out the water like a speedboat. Ma was right: he'd find his way home, and, what's more, he'd be there in half of no time. But Gomer and Tom were there waiting for him, and when I got home he was deep and snug in his bracken with a feed of oats in the manger.

After the excitement of the transfer was over we went back to the kitchen. Tom said: 'What are we going to do now, Ma? Hamer'll be up as soon as he's sober. What are we going to tell him?'

'Tell him he can't have the pony.'

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Tom looked worried. 'But he bought him, Ma!'

'Ay, but he didn't keep his part of the bargain.'

'He won't take that for an answer, daft as he is.'

'He needn't! I'm going to buy Dick back from him.'

'Buy him! But what are you going to use for money?'

'I'll get the money. We'll sell the piano.'

'But what about our Gomer's music lessons?'

'Gomer can learn the flute. Can't you, Gomer?' she asked, turning to my youngest brother with persuasion ready on the tip of her tongue. But Gomer nodded. He was easy. He wouldn't pout over the loss of the piano. In any case he'd got no further than 'The Bells of Aberdovey,' and his left hand was shaky even with those.

DANDO Hamer came up early next morning and Ma was ready for him. Gomer and I were there to see the fun. Dando was very mild and sheepish. 'Morning, Mrs Pritchard,' he said. 'Thank you for putting up the pony.' Ma looked at him without speaking and he twirled the peak of his cap uneasily.

'It was all a perfect accident,' he went on quite animatedly. 'I was detained, you see, longer than I expected.'

'Dando Hamer,' Ma said, with all the scorn she could command, 'you're not fit to brush out the pony's stall!'

Dando bent his head and acknowledged his failings. 'Can I have him now?' he asked after a few long seconds.

My mother quietly folded her apron. 'No, you cannot. The pony is staying with me,' she said.

Dando stiffened and worked himself into a fury. A flood of words poured out, all in a beery jumble. The word police was mixed up with them.

'Police!' my mother said quietly. 'Don't use that word, Dando. Just you be thinking what you'll say when I've fetched the Cruelty Inspector to see the pony!'

Dando worked his lips in silence. 'But how can I go on my round?' he whined.

'Davey Prothero Bonanza Stores has just bought a motor-car, and his horse is spare. Go up to him and ask him to lend you the

horse, and take your ol' cart away from here. I'll pay back the money you gave me for the pony.'

Dando looked narrowly at my mother. He knew that there were no long stockings hidden in our house. 'When, Mrs Pritchard?' he asked with a polite leer.

'As soon as I've sold the piano. Be off with you now! I can't waste time talking to no purpose.'

But Dando had suddenly brightened up. The word piano had struck a hidden chord somewhere deep inside him. 'Is that the piano with the green front?' he asked eagerly. 'Wanting to sell it, you are?'

'Yes.'

'Can I have a look at it?'

My mother stared at Dando, and then she remembered how he'd stood listening at the back-door to Gomer's playing when first he had come to the house—weeks ago. She motioned him to follow her into the parlour. He stood back from the old piano, his cap in his hand and his little mottled eyes dancing under his untidy mop of grey hair. 'Does it still work?' he whispered.

'Of course it works,' Ma answered scornfully. 'Our Gomer can nearly make it sing.' She moved her finger across the keys, all yellowed with age, and Dando was plainly moved by the tinkling shower of notes that scattered themselves about the room. He stood before the piano as if it were an altar. The melancholy echo of the notes, filling the room long after they had been sounded, had stirred some long-forgotten memory in him. He was like a man transformed, a man who had heard angels. Then he stirred to life and blurted out suddenly: 'The pony back and one pound over for the piano!'

My mother looked at him and saw his excitement. 'Two pounds back with the pony.'

Dando glanced at the piano again.

'Go on,' Ma encouraged, 'take your time. Have a good look at it!'

He stepped forward timidly and ran his hand over the silk front and touched the smooth mahogany with reverence. His fingers hovered above the keys, but he drew back before striking them. Still looking at the piano, he said: 'Right you are, Mrs Pritchard. A beautiful instrument! Two pounds back. Fetch it before tea-time. Here's the money to start with.' And with one movement he had whipped out two notes from his pockets.

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He placed them on the piano and was away up to Prothero's to get the loan of a horse. Some strange concord of sweet forgotten sounds had stirred Dando so that he was already a new man with a shining purpose in life.

Ma smiled as she watched him hurrying away. 'And now, the Lord preserve us,' she cried, shaking her head, 'Dando's going to teach himself to play!' And later, as she got me and Gomer our meal, she said: 'I think you'll do better with the flute, Gomer. That old piano was getting out of tune, anyway. A trouble, too, it was getting to polish it every day.'

Dando borrowed Prothero's horse, as Ma had suggested, and fetched the piano that afternoon. And Dick stayed in his old stall and soon had some flesh on his bones again. None of us minded very much about losing the piano. Its tinkling had become as unwelcome to us as the sound of the school bell; and, until Ma could get him a flute, Gomer was quite content to play at football. Tom

brought home a card-table he'd won in a raffle and Ma placed it in the parlour to fill up the space; and soon the piano was forgotten.

At least, so we thought, until a certain morning when Ma went in there to polish what was left of the furniture. It was hard to say just what had reminded her of the piano. Perhaps she had heard, as she bent down to her dusting, an echo of one of its chiming, melancholy notes; or perhaps she had just seen its dark outline on the faded wallpaper. Whatever it was, she stopped and called to Gomer and me in the back-kitchen: 'I wonder how the piano is getting on. I wonder if that Dando is using it properly. I'll have to take a walk down that way before I'm much older, just to have a look at it. Pity for the damp to get into it and ruin it—a beautiful instrument like that.'

And as I looked at Gomer I saw his face beginning to screw itself up dolefully, exactly as it used to do when he struggled to ring those chiming, jangling 'Bells.'

Life

*There on the fiddle o' the hairt
The fiddler's bow draps gently doon,
An' syne frae oot the singin' airt
There fa's the liltin' o' life's tune.*

*Hoo blithe the first string's happy sang
Fa's in the prelude o' life's day.
It's siclike music, sweet and strang,
That only bairns and angels play.*

*The middle strings wi' soarin' wings
In minuet fill a' the sky,
An' ilka oor wi' music rings,
When love an' life gangs dancin' by.*

*But oh the tenderness that stills,
Drawn frae the fowerth string's gowden soul—
A nocturne sweet, whose peace owerfills
An' maks o' life a perfect whole.*

*It's siclike tunes,
Sic tender tunes,
That fowk an' angels play,
An' a' sic tunes,
Wi' ither tunes,
Mak up life's fiddlin' day.*

GILBERT RAE.

Twice-Told Tales

XIX.—A French Wedding Ceremony

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of July 1852]

THE ceremony of the *chow* is the type of the fecundity of marriage. Two lads go and dress themselves up, and then return, accompanied by music, dogs, children, and firing of pistols. They represent a couple of beggars—husband and wife—covered with rags : they are called the gardener and his wife (*le jardinier* and *la jardinière*), and give out that they have the charge and the cultivation of the sacred cabbage. The man's face is be-daubed with soot and wine-lees, or sometimes covered with a grotesque mask. A broken pot or an old shoe, suspended to his belt with a bit of string, serves him to beg for and collect the offerings of wine. No one refuses; and he pretends to drink, and then pours the wine on the ground, in token of libation. He now feigns to be tipsy, and rolls in the mud; whilst his poor wife runs after him, reproaching him pathetically, and calling for help. A handbarrow is now brought, on which is placed the gardener, with a spade, a cord, and a large basket. Four strong men carry him on their shoulders. His wife follows on foot, and the old folks come after with a grave and pensive air; then the nuptial procession march two by two to the measure of the music. The firing of pistols recommences, the dogs bark more loudly than ever at the sight of the gardener thus borne in triumph, and the children jeer him as he passes. The procession arrives at the bride's dwelling and enters the garden. There a fine cabbage is selected—a matter which is not effected in a hurry, for the old folks hold a council, each one pleading for some favourite cabbage. Votes are taken; and when the choice is made, the gardener ties his cord round the stalk, and retreats to the further end of the garden, whilst the other actors in the comedy—the flaxdresser, the grave-digger, the carpenter, and the shoemaker—all stand round the cabbage. One digs a trench, advances, recedes, makes a plan, spies at the others through a pair of spectacles;

and, in short, after various difficulties and mummeries, the gardener pulls the cord, his wife spreads her apron, and the cabbage falls majestically amidst the hurrahs of the spectators. The basket is then brought, the two gardeners plant the cabbage in it with all sorts of precautions; fresh earth is put round its root, it is propped with sticks, and carefully tied up. Rosy apples on the end of sticks, branches of thyme, sage, and laurel are stuck all round it, and the whole is decked with ribbons and streamers. The trophy is then replaced on the handbarrow with the gardener who has to hold it upright, and prevent any accident. Lastly, the procession leaves the garden in good order, and to a measured march. On coming, however, to the gate, and again when they enter the court-yard of the bridegroom's house, an imaginary obstacle opposes their passage. The bearers stumble, raise a great outcry, draw back, advance again, and, as if repelled by some invincible force, pretend to give way under their load. Meantime the bystanders keep exclaiming, to excite and encourage the bearers.

On reaching the court-yard of the bridegroom, the cabbage is lifted off the barrow, and carried to the highest point of the house—whether a chimney, a gable, or a pigeon-house. The gardener plants it there, and waters it with a large pitcher of wine, whilst a salvo of pistol-shots, and the joyous contortions of the *jardinière*, announce its inauguration. The same ceremony is immediately recommended: another cabbage is removed from the bridegroom's garden, and carried with the same formalities to the roof of the house which his wife has just quitted. These trophies remain there, until the wind and rain destroy the baskets, and carry away the plants; but they generally remain long enough to verify the predictions of the village dames, that ere their removal, the new-married couple shall be blessed with a pretty little addition to their domestic happiness.



Carlo's Boy

M. MARTIN

IT was early in 1941 when we came back to Alex for a heavenly spell in dry-dock. The old *Puffin*—she was one of the old coal-burning sweepers—had her bottom well fouled and the rivets half-shaken out of her by Ju. 87's and off-shore desert storms during two months of inshore work along the coast up to Bizerta, and everyone from the skipper to the O.D. of the watch was sighing for the bright lights. We had spent most of our nights closed up at action stations, and I passed most of my time huddled up in two sweaters and a duffel-coat, scraping sand out of my ears and discussing in loving detail with Rattler Morgan the platefuls of steak, eggs, and chips, and the more or less downy beds of the Gypo hostellries.

Before we got in, I had a piece of the rottenest luck. I had to appear before the Bloke as a defaulter—never mind what for—and the flinty old son of a gun weighed me off with four days' stoppage of leave and pay. That left me with three days still to do after we got into dock, and I spent them sitting in disgruntled solitude on the mess-deck. It was only solitude in a sense, because I had plenty of Wog dockyard mateys to keep me company, tripping over my toes, breathing clouds of garlic in my face, and offering to teach me

card tricks for 'one bar chocolat.' But they didn't have any place in those middle-watch dreams of mine.

It didn't last for ever, though, and at four o'clock of a sunny Thursday afternoon I trotted over the gangway with Rattler, tricked out in my snowy number-sixes, and all set for the big moment.

IT was something of a custom at that time for each ship's company to choose its own bar and stick to it. The *Puffin's*, whether by chance or by design, clewed up in a spot called Carlo's Bar, and by all accounts they were on a good thing. 'Ambrosia and nectar' one of the sparkers had called the food and beer, although to palates blunted by a two months' assault of tinned herrings and pusser's cocoa, any sort of cooking might have qualified for that description. Anyway, the *Puffin's* had their feet well and truly under the table, and the old patron was beginning to hail them like prodigal sons—and some of them were well in the running for that title.

Rattler and I made our way out of the dockyard, and, after running the gauntlet of all the Wog hucksters and touts of Sisters' Street, reached Mohammed Ali Square and

CARLO'S BOY

took a tram to Ramleh, where this matelets' paradise of beer and eats was situated.

We got there about five, and found that practically the entire watch had beaten us to it. In fact, the festivities were well under way, and the two big, beaming Sudanese waiters in their white night-gowns were shuttling like fury between the kitchen and the tables, performing miracles of jugglery with steaming plates under the gloomy eye of the patron.

WE sat down, ordered the biggest dish on the menu, and squared our elbows for some solid trencher-work. Then, after the wreck had been cleared away and we'd got our breath back, we moved over to the bar for a drink.

The patron himself set the drinks up. He was a small, thin bloke, with a greasy, sallow complexion, woebegone black eyes, and long-lobed ears. His whole appearance reminded me of a spaniel with a secret sorrow and there was certainly no trace of the genial host in his make-up. The grateful glow pervading my tummy made me oblivious of the woes of the world and I didn't pay much attention to him, but I pretty soon became aware that he and Rattler were deep in an animated conversation in which Rattler was doing most of the listening. This Carlo bird seemed to have undergone quite a transformation. He didn't lose much of his careworn look, but his eyes became brighter, and the emotion which he was obviously feeling accentuated the naturally oily tendency of his skin, making him sweat profusely. Very soon he pulled out a bunch of photographs and spread them before Rattler with a good deal of pointing and explanation.

It occurred to me then that Rattler had got himself another customer. It was the same on board with Rattler. They all seemed to pour out their troubles to him. He was a long, thin stooping lad, with large soft eyes, and a fluffy quiff of fair hair hanging over his forehead. Whether it was the eyes or the quiff I don't know, but there was something about him that always made stout motherly women yearn towards him and drew confidences from the most reticent men. It was evident that Carlo was no model of reticence, once he really took the brakes off.

I didn't butt in, Carlo's worries being none of my business, but on the way back to the Fleet Club that night a momentary curiosity

about the old chap crossed my mind. 'This Carlo,' I asked Rattler, 'what is he? He sounds like an Eyetie. Aren't they supposed to be interred or something? How does he come to be still on the loose—and doing a roaring trade to boot?'

'He's not Italian,' said Rattler. 'He used to be, but he's not now. He came here about twenty years ago to work as a cook. Pretty soon he set up business on his own and struck root so firmly that he decided to become an Egyptian citizen. Last May he sent his wife and family back to Italy to spend a holiday with her folks.'

'Then Musso took a hand, and now the family's on indefinite leave?'

'That's the size of it. The poor old beggar's worried stiff. He hasn't heard a word since last June and he doesn't know what to do. His boy Luigi was studying medicine. Now that's off, and his two girls are in Italy, too.'

Well, it was just another story of wartime hardship to me. I don't like to be thought callous, but I can't honestly say that I lost any sleep over it. Rattler, though, was in no danger of forgetting any of the affecting details. The harrowing story, the display of the photographs, became a routine performance with Carlo whenever Rattler showed up. He hadn't the heart to rebuff the old boy, but he told me just when we were leaving dry-dock that he not only knew every lineament of Carlo's progeny, but was even beginning to see them in his sleep, gazing mournfully at him through barbed-wire. But let's get on with the yarn.

THE spell in dry-dock slipped past like a dream of home, and one bright breezy morning found us secured to the buoy, swinging in the stream and waiting with an unpleasant sense of expectancy for further orders. They came, were announced, and all hands breathed a concerted sigh of relief. We were to do harbour-guard patrol off Alex. Not a very arduous number.

That night we slipped and proceeded to sea. The evening breeze had died away completely, the sky was clear and starry, and a sliver of moon stood above the horizon. Conditions were ideal for quiet rest and reflection, for adjusting oneself to the old routine once more. After a long season of inactivity, operations in the desert had

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began to warm up again, and minelaying aircraft were making a nuisance of themselves round the harbour approaches. So we were on the alert, though reluctant to believe that there was still a war on.

The first half-hour of the middle watch was barely past, when my communication number jerked up his nodding head, pressed his earphones close, listening intently, and sang out: 'Enemy formation, five miles, closing!' The last syllable was drowned by the strident clatter of the action bell, and the watch below came scrambling out dragging on its overalls, and too stupefied with sweet sleep even to express their feelings in the customary manner. I took a good grip of the elevating-handles and looked across at Rattler in the trainer's seat. He looked back with the same queer expression in his eyes. We waited.

'Alarm starboard!'

Rattler cranked furiously.

'Enemy aircraft bearing green two-O. Angle of sight six-O!'

'Fuse two. All guns with H.E. and full charge, load!'

'Oh-ho,' I thought, 'this merchant has foxed them somewhat—short fuse—she's close aboard.'

WE saw the plane coming in low and fast on a minelaying run, a flitting point of deeper darkness against the gloom of the night sky. Almost simultaneously came the order: 'Independent firing, commence, commence, commence.' I had her squarely in the sights with 200 knots aim-off. Rattler sung out: 'Trainer on!' and I stood on the pedal.

Now, I'd given that long-suffering pedal many a vicious stamp since September '39, but for all the effect it had on 87's, Dorniers—yes, and even a few misidentified Spitfires—and the rest, I might as well have been throwing spuds at them. I was rapidly losing hope, but this first round gave me quite a glow of

self-satisfaction. The plane—it looked like an Eytic S.M. 79—was practically alongside now, and the shell-burst made a lurid splash, under her wing, canting her over with the force of its concussion almost on to the opposite wing-tip. It was a fluke, I couldn't help thinking, an outrageous fluke, but anyway we qualify for that long-deferred round of beer the skipper promised to the first successful gun's crew.

The plane was obviously in difficulties. She came round in a long shallow glide, one wing low. It was one of those moments, so frequent in war, but which never quite lose their quiet scalp-prickling horror, when one stands in safety and watches one's fellow-men carried inexorably to death. Finally she touched the surface, ploughed along in a flurry of foam, settled, gradually cocked up her tail, and sank.

The whaler had been piped away as soon as it had become apparent that the plane was attempting to crash-land. Within half-an-hour she was back, and we were heaving three limp, soggy foemen on to the upper-deck. I helped to pump some of the surplus brine out of one of them and then went over to give a hand to Rattler, who was standing by another. It was plain that this bird had made his last flight. He had a ragged hole in his chest, which spouted a crimson fountain with every agonised breath he drew; and the fountain was becoming steadily lower and more irregular. I stuck it till the end, and then turned away, feeling low and sick. Rattler was still watching this lad, but with an expression on his homely mug which brought me up with a round turn. In that sort of situation you've got to be a bit cynical, you've just got to. 'Come on,' I said, 'let's secure and go below. What's the matter? Is this guy a pal of yours?'

Rattler took a long look at the corpse and then gave me a steady stare. 'Sort of,' he replied. 'He's Carlo's boy.'

Idleness and Love

*How can they say the busy bee
Improves each shining hour?
If I'd to work as long as he,
My honey would be sour.*

LORNA WOOD.

Greener Lawns

THE great problem to-day is undoubtedly labour, and this is especially true in the garden. I am sometimes asked which is the cheapest form of gardening, and the answer again and again is—the lawn. I am quite aware that it is the cutting that is so tiresome, but then it is possible nowadays to do this mechanically. There are electrical lawnmowers that are ideal for the small garden, and they work as easily as vacuum-cleaners. Motor-mowers are first-class.

There is a lot to be said for the camomile lawn as a change from the ordinary grass. Those who have had the privilege of walking across that beautiful sward at the back of Buckingham Palace will know that it largely consists of camomile on the one side. There, I am told, it just occurred, and when King George V saw it he would not have it grubbed out, but said: 'Let it spread,' and spread it did. The advantage of camomile is that it remains a lovely dark-green colour throughout the driest of seasons and the lawn is not only delightfully soft, but also fragrant.

If you fancy a camomile lawn, you can buy the seed of *Anthemis nobilis*, and you can sow this in a little seed-bed and thus raise plants which you will dibble out, when they are a few months old, 6 inches apart all over the ground where you want your new lawn to be. It may be nearly two years before the plants actually meet, and for this reason some people prefer to plant at 3 inches and thus get a coverage in a year's time. A very famous gardener called Charles Marshall suggested in 1805 that the camomile ought to be planted

at 9 or 10 inches square and then the plants ought to be rolled well regularly to encourage the spreading runners to fix themselves.

A method I have seen tried with success is to mix the seed of *Anthemis nobilis* with a good lawn-seed like Chewing's Fescue and then to sow in the usual way, at, say, an ounce per square yard. Once the camomile gets established, it soon spreads and smothers the grass, especially if it is regularly rolled. John Evelyn in his *Kalendarium Hortense* says, under the heading October: 'It will now be good to beat and roll the camomile, for now the ground is supple.' So, if you are starting a camomile lawn, don't forget this advice of long ago.

Maybe, however, you are not at all interested in camomile and you much prefer to concentrate on ordinary grass. Well, if you do, please see that your lawn is composed of grass and grass only, and is not a mass of weeds. There are hormones to-day which are extremely useful. They can be bought from any good horticultural chemist, and if they are applied now in accordance with the instructions given they will cause the weeds to curl up and die, but will not affect the grass at all. It usually takes about a week before the hormones show their effect and another ten days or so before the affected weeds are really dead.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

Orders for the Month

Flowers.—Propagate geraniums from cuttings. Lift Canterbury bells and sweet williams after flowering. Clip hedges. Cut pansies back. Bud roses: prune climbing roses. Thin dahlia growths. Feed sweet-peas.

Fruit.—Thin dessert plums. Hoe out superfluous raspberry suckers: mulch bushes. Tie young shoots of loganberries out of harm's way. Layer strawberry runners, having applied sedge-peat on ground first. Cut back laterals of red-currents by half to let in sunshine.

Vegetables.—Sow Batavian endive, spring cabbage for planting out in September, and spinach-beet for winter use. Feed the tomato plants with liquorure. Give maincrop potatoes their final earthing: spray with Bordeaux mixture to prevent potato blight.

Greenhouses.—Move young cyclamens into larger pots. Pot up seedling cinerarias and rooted cuttings of Alpines. Tie in shoots of chrysanthemums. Pot on *Primula elatior* and winter-flowering wall-flowers. Layer carnations. Pot arums. Summer-prune peach-trees. Prick out *Primula malacoides*.

Science at Your Service

ERADICATING SNAKEPIPE

ONE of grassland's most troublesome weeds is snakepipe or horsetail. It prevents many thousands of acres of pasture from being effectively used to support milk- or meat-production, for the weed is at the least injurious to animal health, and sometimes has been fatally poisonous. Snakepipe is particularly common in marshland, and although in winter such pasture is unfit for grazing it is usually very valuable in the summer. However, the presence of snakepipe inevitably means that milk-yields drop sharply when cattle are sent to graze on such land; even if the grass is cut for hay or silage the weed will still exert its toxic influence when the hay or silage is fed in winter.

Until recently no hopeful means of eradicating snakepipe from grassland was known. The persistence of the weed is due to its growing habits. It flourishes on a mineral diet that would be inadequate for most plants. It does not spread by seeding; as with the fern species, new plants develop from spores; the strength of the weed resides in its creeping root-system, and weedkillers that destroy only the upper foliage and stem leave the root unaffected and able to throw up many more shoots.

Although first attempts to control snakepipe with modern selective weedkillers had failed, renewed efforts were made last year on a Somerset dairy-farm owned by a well-known agricultural scientist. It was found that an exceptionally low rate of treatment, lower than would be effective for many ordinary weeds, succeeded where previously much higher rates had failed. Throughout the grazing or ensiling season snakepipe was eradicated. It would seem that the low rate of application enables a small but effective amount of the chemical to be translocated into the root system of this weed. As little as $2\frac{1}{2}$ pints per acre of one of the proprietary selective weedkillers needs to be used. If general success can be achieved, many thousands of acres of land now classified as rough grazing or even as unfit for grazing

can be brought into much fuller use. Moreover, the case for drainage schemes for marshland is greatly strengthened; formerly it has been arguable that snakepipe in many instances offsets the benefits to be obtained by drainage.

A CREAM-SEPARATOR

Country readers may be interested in a new cream-separating appliance that can be used for as little as two pints of milk or as much as almost one gallon. No special equipment of a mechanical nature is used. The milk is left to stand for a few hours in the pottery-constructed bowl or pan. Then, when the contents are poured out through the lip, a cream trap retains all the cream but permits the milk to pass. The price of this appliance is very moderate. It should be of particular interest in the West Country, where milk-scalding for cream-removal is still widely practised.

A SYPHON APPLIANCE

For emptying tanks, tubs, or barrels in industry nothing is more helpful than the long-known syphon principle, but it is often a bothersome task to create the conditions that produce syphon flow. An ingenious device, perhaps best described as a pressure syphon, has been developed for this task. Briefly, it consists of a triple-branch hose, which is connected to the syphon apparatus. The long end of the hose is single and this is placed in the receptacle to be emptied. The other end of the hose is double-branched, with two short and parallel lengths of hose. These are each attached to the taps above a sink, one to the cold tap, the other to the hot tap. It is not necessary for the hot-cold distinction, but, in the majority of cases, this will probably be the usual arrangement that provides two adjacent water-taps. The cold-water tap is then turned on slowly. When bubbling has ceased in the tub or tank, the hose on the other tap is removed and placed in the sink. The contents of the receptacle will then be syphoned into the sink.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A SLIDE-RULE FOR BELTING

Calculating the most desirable width of belting for a specific drive is generally regarded as a cumbersome operation involving the use of a slide-rule and belting tables. A new specialised slide-rule is now available. It is claimed to reduce the operation to one setting of the slide—that is to say, setting it so that the pulley diameter coincides with the pulley revolutions per minute gives the belt-speed in feet per minute and the width of belt needed for transmitting any given horsepower. A table also gives minimum recommended pulley diameters for all thicknesses and types of belting. The principle of the slide is the use of a reversed logarithmic scale which has made it possible for all the answers to be obtained from a single setting of the variable factors. The slide, made in transparent plastic, is not sold, but offered to bona fide works engineers and executives by a firm of power transmission engineers.

CHEMICALS VERSUS TUBERCULOSIS

Although tuberculosis is no longer the devastating disease that John Bunyan called 'the captain of all the men of death,' it still remains the principal cause of death for people of working age. The causative bacillus has been known since 1882. The long but so far unrealised hope has been a drug that can kill the bacilli. When the discovery of streptomycin followed that of penicillin high hopes were entertained, for streptomycin showed specific anti-bacterial activity for the tubercle bacilli. Unfortunately the effect, though definite, is short-lived. The bacilli develop resistance to streptomycin and the benefits from initial treatment with this drug cannot be maintained. After this set-back it was found that the ability of the bacilli to develop resistance was reduced if at the same time another drug was given—*p*-amino-salicylic acid or PAS. Even with this combined treatment, however, patients too often reach a point when further help cannot be derived.

The search for a truly effective chemical weapon against tuberculosis is not discouraged by these reverses—indeed, they are not total reverses, for the streptomycin-PAS treatment often gives patients a useful period of respite, which in turn enables other methods of treatment to be given. Hundreds of mould derivatives—antibiotics like penicillin—are being tested to find whether eventually just one such substance will have a more durable

effect than streptomycin. A purely-chemical class of drugs, developed in Germany, has been known for some time to possess powerfully lethal effect upon tubercle bacilli. These synthetic drugs, thiosemicarbozones, are unfortunately too toxic to be used: their other effects on the human system are too dangerous. This year in America, however, it has been announced that new drugs, based on this German pattern, possess the power to kill tubercle bacilli but are not toxic. To date, only small-scale clinical tests support these claims. Promising though the evidence is, at least two years' further testing is needed before it is possible to know whether at long last the tubercle bacillus can be truly defeated by an anti-bacterial chemical.

AIR-FILTRATION

In average atmospheres 300,000 particles of dust may be found in a cubic foot of air; but in industrial areas this may rise to 4 or 5 million particles. Apart from health aspects, reduction of dust presence in air is important for many manufacturing processes; when a process adds dust to the factory air, the health aspect becomes predominant. Air-cleansing devices have become increasingly important in modern industry. A new system recently introduced by a British company is based upon fine-hair brushes. Numbers of cylindrical brushes, resembling pull-through brushes in design, are held in panels so that their hair-bristles intermingle. It is claimed that they thus form a perfect screen or filter that removes all dust from air. The most striking feature of this brush system, however, is not the fact that brushes can act as an effective filter, but that each brush can be separately detached from the panel or frame and be cleaned for reuse. A cleaning ring and a vacuum-cleaner attachment for this purpose are available from the manufacturers at extra cost. If the dust collected has an oily nature the brushes should be cleaned in soapy water or a detergent wash. The filter-panel can therefore be used and reused indefinitely. The standard unit panel is 24 by 24 by 2½ inches, but air-filters may be composed of several of these units if necessary, or made specially to suit particular requirements. The capacity of one unit is about 1000 cubic feet of air per minute. A sideline property of these brush-filters is the marked reduction in noise they cause when fitted to the air-intake of high-speed machinery.

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A MODERN SANDGLASS

Time is no longer measured, except curiously, by the sundial, but that other ancient device for measuring intervals of time—the sandglass—is still considerably employed. Sandglasses have a wide variety of uses in industry, particularly where processing operations must occupy precise periods of time. One British neon-tube concern today devotes some of its experience in tube-manufacture to making sandglasses that are indeed precision instruments. This company offers sandglasses which are capable of measuring intervals from 15 seconds to 60 minutes, each sandglass being housed in a rotatable holder suitable for wall or control-panel placement.

ANTI-STATIC POLISHING

It is not suggested that polishing is one of life's less mobile tasks. Here the word 'static' refers to static electricity. The charge developed on an ebonite rod when it is rubbed by silk or other fabrics is well known to every schoolboy. When different substances are rubbed together, the friction creates a positive charge on one surface and a negative charge on the other; if the surfaces are non-conducting a fairly high potential difference is accumulated. Now that non-conducting plastic materials, such as perspex, are used in aircraft, as wind-shields, etc., polishing their surfaces may lead to the development of charges sufficiently powerful to attract dust and to hold it. Considerable nuisance has been caused by this, not merely because a desirable spit-and-polish appearance is spoilt, but also because vision through the shield or screen may be impaired. To overcome this trouble anti-static polishing cloths are now being manufactured in Britain. These cloths are made from specially-woven fabric impregnated to possess the property of dispelling the static charge during the polishing operation.

It is possible that many minor cases of this dust-attracting trouble with domestic plastic surfaces have been experienced. Users of long-playing gramophone-records, for instance, have found that these are particularly prone to the build-up of static charge, with the consequent attraction of dust, which not only leads to wear of the gramophone-record, but also spoils the sound reproduction. An anti-static polishing cloth successfully deals with this problem.

ELECTRIC-FIRE GUARDS

The risk inherent in electric-fires with unprotected heating-elements has recently been the subject of considerable discussion; it seems probable that manufacturers will soon be compelled to produce guarded fires. Numbers of fatal accidents have resulted from the contact of clothes with naked electric-fire elements; the most serious risks seem to be associated with children and with women wearing rapidly inflammable textiles, e.g. artificial silk. The fact that an electric-fire can be placed in such a variety of positions in a room might suggest that it could always be safely placed. In fact, the positional flexibility of electric-fires is rather a risk-increasing influence.

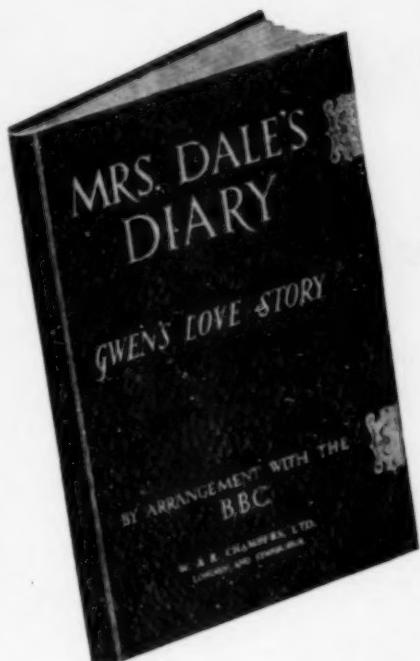
Compulsory guard-fittings for future fires, however, will not reduce the risks of the hundreds of thousands of electric-fires already in use. Their many different patterns make the provision of standard guards as extra fittings a difficult problem. One British company has just introduced a complete range of wire-mesh guards suitable for most of the electric-fires produced during the last twenty years. It was found that nine different models were needed to cover about 95 per cent of all the different makes and sizes of fires in use. The very few odd sizes not catered for by the standard range are not, however, neglected: a department at the works has been set up to deal individually with these, and the company claims to be able to provide a cheap and efficient guard for any type and size of fire, generally by return of post.

All guards are held in position by springs stretched around the back of the fire, and the guards are finished with a polished silver-plate surface. The cost of these attachments is very reasonable.

To CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

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